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HISTORY OF COURT FOOLS.

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BY

DR. DORAN,

AUTHOR OF 'TABLE TRAITS,' 'HABITS AND MEN,' 'LIFE OF YOUNG, THE POET,' 'QUEENS OF THE HOUSE OF HANOVER,' 'KNIGHTS AND THEIR DAYS,' 'MONARCHS RETIRED FROM BUSINESS,' ETC.



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TO

HEPWORTH DIXON,

THIS FRIENDLY HOMAGE

FROM

THE AUTHOR.

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THE

HISTORY OF COURT FOOLS.

THE FOOL,—OF LEGEND AND ANTIQUITY.

In the days of old, it happened that all Olympus was dull, and Zeus complained, yawning the while, that there was not a fool amongst the gods, with wit enough to keep the divine assembly alive, or to kill the members of it with laughter.

"Father," said Mercury, "the sport that is lacking here, may be found for us all, on earth. Look at that broad tract of land between the Peneus and Aliacmon. It is all alive with folks in their holiday gear, enjoying the sunshine, eating sweet melons, singing till they are hoarse, and dancing till they are weary."

"What then?" asked Jupiter.

"It would be rare sport, oh king of gods and men, to scatter all these gaily-robed revellers, and by a shower, spoil their finery."

"Thou hast lived to little purpose in witty companionship, complacent son of Maia," observed the Olympian, "if *that* be thy idea of sport. But thy thought is susceptible of improvement. Let that serene priest, who is fast asleep by the deserted shrine below, announce that a shower is

indeed about to descend, but that it shall wet none but fools."

A slight sound of thunder was heard, and the aroused servant of the gods stood in front of the altar, and made the requisite announcement to the people. There was a philosopher close by, leaning against the door-post of his modest habitation. He no sooner heard that the impending storm was to wet only the fools, than he first hastily covered his head, and next hurriedly entered his dwelling-place and shut himself up in his study. Not another individual prepared to avoid the tempest. Each man waited to see the fools drenched, and every man there was, in two minutes, wet to the very skin.

When the sun re-appeared, the philosopher walked out into the market-place. The thoroughly-soaked idiots, observing his comfortable condition, hailed the good man with the epithet of "fool." They pelted him with sticks and stones, tore his gown, plucked his beard, and loaded him with foul terms that would have twisted the jaw of Aristophanes.

Bruised, battered, deafened, staggering, the philosopher nevertheless contrived to keep his wits. "Oh, sagacious asses!" said he to the roaring crowd, who at once sank into silence at the compliment paid to their wisdom, "have patience but for a single minute, and I will prove to you that I am not such a fool as I look." Bending back his head, and turning the palms of his hands upwards to the sky, "Oh wise father," he exclaimed, "of the witty and the witless, vouchsafe to send down upon me a deluge for my peculiar and individual use. Wet me to the skin even as these fools are wet. Constitute me, thereby, as great a fool as my neighbours; and enable me, in consequence, a fool, to live at peace among fools."

At these words, the two assemblies,—of idiots below, and of Olympians above, shook with laughter, at once loud and

inextinguishable. Down came the shower prayed for, upon the person of the philosopher, but peculiar influences were sent down with it, and the dripping sage rose from his knees ten times wittier than he was before.

Jupiter's beard was yet wagging with laughter, and merry tears fell from the eyelids of Juno, whose head lay in frolicsome helplessness upon the bosom of her hilarious lord,—when the latter exclaimed, "We have spoiled that good fellow's robe, but we will also make his fortune."

"That is already accomplished," remarked Juno. "I have just breathed into the ear of the chief of the district, and *he* is now taking the philosopher home with him, to be at once his diverter and instructor."

At night, as all Olympus looked down into the court of the prince, near whom, at the banquet, the wise fool lay, pouring out witty truths as fast as his lips could utter them, the gods both envied the fun and admired the wisdom. "That fellow," cried Jupiter, "shall be the founder of a race. Henceforward each court shall have its fool; and fools shall be, for many a long day, the preachers and admonishers of kings. Children," he added, to the gods and goddesses, "let us drink his health!"

The brilliant society thus addressed could neither drink nor speak, for laughing. "Dear master," said Hebe, as she took her place behind the monarch of divinities, who looked at her inquiringly, "they laugh, because you did not say fools, *such as he*, should henceforward furnish kings with funny counsel and comic sermons."

"Let their majesties look to it," answered Jove, "here's a health to the first of fools!"

In the legend of the original jester, we cannot well pass over, without some brief illustration, the old, yet ever-young and especial mirth-maker of the court of Olympus itself, where Momus reigned, the joker of the gods. Perhaps I should rather say there he was tolerated, than that there

he reigned. For there was this difference between the sublime immortals and weaker mortals,—that the former could never take a joke from their court fool without wincing, while the latter laughed the louder as the wit was sharper; for they wisely chose to applaud in such jesting,

"the sportive wit,
Which healed the folly that it deigned to hit."

Not so, the irritable gods, with regard to Momus, who was, significantly enough, the Son of Night. Momus however cared nothing for the irritability of his august masters and mistresses. His ready wit pierced them all in turn; and the shafts of his ridicule excited many an absurd roar of anguish. When Minerva had built the house of which she was so proud, the Olympian fool at once detected the error made by the Goddess of Wisdom, and remarked, "Had *I* turned house-builder, I would have had a movable mansion."

"Why so, you intellectual ass?" asked the lady, who was somewhat rough-tongued, and loved antithesis.

"Because," answered the son of Nox, "I could then get away from bad neighbourhoods, and the vicinity of foolish women who consort with owls!"

Venus, clad in her usual attire, and proud in the conviction of her faultlessness, passed by Sir Momus, and turning gracefully in his presence, like Mademoiselle Rosati before a box-full of her admirers, defied him to detect a flaw in her unequalled and dazzling form.

Momus clapped his hands to his eyes, half-blinded by the lustre, and said, "It is true enough, Ourania,—you are not to be looked at without blinking; but before you executed that charming pirouette, I heard your foot-fall on the clouds. Now, a heavy-heeled beauty is not a vessel without a flaw."

Save Venus herself, there was not a goddess within hearing, who did not laugh more or less loudly, at the fool's

censure. Vulcan, to draw off attention from the queen of love, and to gain a compliment for himself, directed the notice of Momus to the clay figure of a man which he had just executed. The critic looked at it for a moment, and turned away with a curl on his lip. "My man," said he, "should have had a window in his chest. Through such a lattice, I could have looked in, not only upon his ailments, but his thoughts."

"My bull here," said Neptune, touching Momus with his trident, which at will he could extend from his own watery plain to the topmost point of Olympus,—"My bull here, of which *I* am the artist, is more perfect than our limping brother's man."

"The beast would have been more perfect still," cried Momus, from his cradle in the clouds, "if he had had eyes nearer his horns. He would strike more surely than he can now. Leave making bulls, oh son of Ops, to your children in Ierne,—though, even *their* bulls shall be as laughable as your own."

In this way the Fool of the Olympian Court treated without reserve the illustrious company, whom he fearlessly mocked and censured. They never bore the censure well; and, ultimately, they rose and ejected him from Heaven. With a mask in one hand, and a small carved figure in the other, he lightly fell to Earth. "You see I come from the skies," said the crafty fellow to the staring crowds that gathered round him, "and therefore am worthy of welcome and worship."

How could the poor people know that he had been kicked out from Olympus? They raised an altar, hoisted the celestial exile above it, danced round it like fools, and went home shouting, "*Vive la Folie!*"

To pretend to show the moral of my story, would be to insult the good sense of my readers.

It is singular that the successor of Momus, as brewer of

laughter to the gods, was Vulcan, and that *he* also was kicked out from Olympus. On the ninth day of his descent he came in sight of Lemnos, where the people, without stopping to think whether they were about to receive a precious gift or a rejected waif from Heaven, stretched out their arms to catch him. It is not everything that seems to come from above, that is divine.

And mark!—Since Momus fell, Folly has never left the Earth. But Vulcan taught men to labour; and the founder of industry, the great doer of a good work, was reconciled with Heaven. And Olympus did not continue without its fools, near or afar. The dances of Silenus, the lumbering grace of Polyphemus, and the coarse jokes of Pan, were provocatives of the empty laughter of the gods; and roystering dances, lumbering graces, and coarse jokes became the stock in trade of fools of later years and of more mortal mould.

They who will take the trouble to recall the incidents in the personal history of many of the philosophers of old, will not fail to perceive that, in many cases, they fulfilled the duties which were performed, much less efficiently, perhaps, by the official fools at modern courts. They appear to have exercised, generally with impunity, a marvellous license of speech, and to have communicated disagreeable truths to tyrants who would not have accepted an unpleasant inuendo from an ordinary courtier, without rewarding it with torture or death. This very rudeness of speech, on the part of many philosophers, to princes who were their patrons, was the distinguishing feature of the modern jester. In this respect they were sometimes imitated by the poets, who occasionally indulged in the criminal folly of making execrable puns; so early do we find an illustration of the remark of Ménage, that in all times the court poet was accounted as being also the court fool. Indeed, we shall see, under the head of French Jesters, a whole flock of

royal poets vying with each other to receive the patent of King's Fool, on the death of the official who had just departed full of honours and "*doubles entendres*."

I believe that a volume might be very respectably filled with illustrations of the identity of philosopher, or poet, and fool,—in the sense of licensed court wit. My readers will probably be satisfied with a few rather than with a volume-full of proofs. Thus, it will be remembered that it was rather a perilous matter to joke with or to convey rough truths to the mind of the great Alexander. But his favourite philosopher, the light-hearted Anaxarchus, was able to do both, with impunity. What a necessary but disagreeable truth did he impress on his royal master, when the latter was bleeding from a recently received wound. "Ah!" exclaimed the philosopher, pointing to the place, "that shows that, after all, you are only a man, and not a god, as people call you, and as you would like to believe."

Alexander only smiled at this very sufficient little sermon, and did not resent what perhaps he considered as amusing ignorance. It is remarkable, however, that as in less remote days we meet with potentates who could not tolerate the free-spoken court fool, so in those earlier times we find "tyranni," who were utterly unable to digest a joke or a reproach. Now the speech of Anaxarchus was utterly disgusting to the mind and feelings of Nicocreon of Salamis, who happened to be present when it was uttered. What the philosopher's especial patron chose to take without discerning offence in it, it was not for Nicocreon to resent; but he never forgot or forgave it. Alexander was hardly dead when Nicocreon contrived to get Anaxarchus into his power, and he ordered that the philosopher should be pounded to death in a mortar. "Pound away! pound away!" exclaimed the heroic fellow, as the iron hammers were reducing him to pulp, "it's only my body! you cannot pound my soul!". Nicocreon told him that if he were not more silent and less

saucy, his tongue should be cut out. To show how little Anaxarchus cared for the threat, he bit his tongue in two, and spat the mangled piece into the face of the tyrant.

There, indeed, his wit may be said to have failed him, and he acted with less presence of mind than the philosopher Zeno, when the latter was in a precisely similar situation. When the inventor of dialectics lay nearly bruised to death under the pestles of the executioners employed by Nearchus, he called the latter to him as if he had something of importance to communicate. Nearchus bent over the lip of the mortar to listen, and Zeno, availing himself of his opportunity and his excellent teeth, bit off the ear of the tyrant close to his head. Hence "a biting remark, like that of Zeno," passed into a proverb.

In a later page, it will be seen how the famous jester, Gonella, had the boldness of speech, but lacked the boldness of soul, of Anaxarchus and Zeno. There was a saying of Gonella's that very nearly resembles one of Hippias, a free-spoken philosopher of Elis, who pleasantly made virtue consist in the entire freedom of man from all and every sort of dependence upon his fellow-men. Again, in Anaximenes, —not that philosopher who maintained that the stars were the heads of bright nails driven into the solid concave of the sky, but the pupil of Diogenes,—we find a parallel with Chicot, the celebrated jester of the French Kings Henry III., the last Valois, and Henry IV., the first Bourbon. Both were occasionally engaged in affairs of political importance, and Anaximenes, on one of these occasions, did capital service to his employers. Lampsacus was being besieged by Alexander. It had nobly resisted; but, unable to hold out any longer, the authorities deputed the philosopher to make terms with the besieger. As soon as the latter beheld Anaximenes, guessing his errand, he exclaimed, in a burst of foolish rage, "I entirely refuse, beforehand, to grant what you are about to ask." Chicot used to call

Henry III. a "simpleton," but Anaximenes only laughed pleasantly in the face of Alexander, as he said, "May it please your irresistible godship, the favour then which I have to ask is, that you will destroy the city of Lampsacus, enslave the citizens, and ruin their delegate who stands before you." The conqueror laughed in his turn, and well rewarded the ready wit of a man who was for some years attached to his person.

The poets were not less free than the philosophers. When King Antigonus once caught his favourite Rhodian poet, Antagoras, cooking fish, he asked the bard whether Homer condescended to dress meals while he aspired to register the deeds of Agamemnon. "I cannot say," answered the Rhodian, "but I very strongly believe this, that the king did not trouble himself as to whether any man in his army boiled fish or left it alone!"

The boldness of some of the old poets was quite on a par with their wit. Their absolute freedom of speech, like that of their official successors, the fools, was as useful and fearless as the modern freedom of the press. There were very few of the parasites and jesters of Dionysius who would venture to tell that disagreeable person beneficial truths. Antiphon, his poet, was an exception. The monarch once asked him, "What brass was the best?" and Antiphon answered, "That of which the statues of Aristogiton and Harmodius were made." Considering that these were two patriots who rescued Athens from the tyranny of the Pisistratidæ, the answer was as daring as it was witty. Dionysius disregarded the wit, and resented the audacity; —in a sneaking way, however, for he put Antiphon to death because he refused to praise the writings of the despot. In one respect, Dionysius was like Cardinal Richelieu, he looked with spiteful feelings on every man who ventured to doubt his ability for writing tragedies. But in another sense, the "tyrannus" was superior to the cardinal,

for he at least wrote his own tragedies, whereas those of Richelieu were written for him by his buffoon, Bóisrobert, who might well afford to praise them. For a better reason than that which induced Richelieu to patronize Boisrobert (who, buffoon as he was, founded the French Academy), Philadelphus patronized the comic poet Aristonymus, whom the king made Keeper of the Library at Alexandria, and who kept the king in good humour by his joyous conversation. Aristonymus did not forget that he held a double office; and as the Bards censured as well as commended the behaviour of the people, so he scattered eulogy or blame on the conduct of his patron, according to the latter's deserts.

We shall find, in subsequent pages, instances of kings going into mourning on the death of their fools, and of the royal patrons raising tombs to them. In ancient times we also have instances of a whole people cherishing their poets quite as fondly as some monarchs did their jesters. I will only cite the case of Eupolis, that comic poet of Athens, whose unlicensed wit was so very little to the taste of Alcibiades, and who ultimately perished in a naval engagement between the Athenians and the Lacedemonians. His countrymen were so afflicted at losing a man whose wit and poetry were as new life to them, that they passed a decree whereby it was ordered that no poet should ever afterwards go to war. Artaxerxes did not mourn more truly for his witty but then deceased slave Tiridates, than the Athenians mourned for Eupolis. But Artaxerxes did not mourn half so long. He sat weeping, indeed, for three days, but he found consolation when Aspasia offered her ivory shoulder to support his aching head. So Henry II., of France, mourned for his dead jester Thony, even commissioning Ronsard to write his epitaph, but forgetting poet, fool, and epitaph in contemplating the mature beauty of Diana of Poictiers.

Less forgetful of a favourite dead wit was the patron of the comic poet, Timocreon of Rhodes; famous alike for his

sharp appetite and verses, and for his power of pouring out wit and pouring in wine. It was a brother wit who would not venture to praise him, but who contrived to make the dead jester censure, by celebrating, himself in the apparently autograph lines,

"Multa bibens, et multa vorans, mala denique dicens
Multis, hîc jaceo Timocreon Rhodius."

"Having drunk much, eaten much, and spoken much evil, here I lie, Timocreon of Rhodes." This heathen jester lived nearly five centuries before the Christian era; I might perhaps, had I a right to act "Censor," suggest that his epitaph would not be unsuitable over many a serious but defunct gentleman, born since that era commenced.

Let me rather do justice to the wit and independence of the old poets, generally. While doing so, I cannot but add my conviction that the philosophers were, on the whole, more independent in their jests than the poets. When Apollonius repaired from Chalcis to Rome, to become the tutor of Marcus Antoninus, he refused to go to the palace at all, saying that it was fitter for the pupil to come to the house of the instructor than for the latter to go to the dwelling of the pupil. The imperial hint, good-humouredly conveyed, that he had himself commenced this latter process by repairing from Chalcis to Rome, could not move him.

It has been usual, and Flögel* has done it, among others, to rank the elder Aristippus among the ancient court wits. Inasmuch as that he was the chief flatterer of Dionysius of Sicily, and loved Epicurean voluptuousness, the founder of the Cyrenaic sect may be allowed to pass under that title, but he had little in common with the court jester of more modern times. He was as different from the latter in some respects, as he was from Crassus, the grandfather of Crassus the Rich, who according to Pliny was never known to laugh, —not even when his best friend broke his thigh.

* 'Geschichte der Hof-Narren.'

It is certain that Dionysius treated his flatterers as later sovereigns did their official jesters,—allowing for the difference of manners, morals, and customs. The poor jester whose head was placed on the executioner's block by the sportive order of the ducal sovereign of Ferrara, proved indeed to be even worse off than the parasite Damocles, when Dionysius seated him on his throne, beneath an unsheathed sword suspended from a horse-hair.

Again, the freedom which the court fool subsequently held by right of office, we find fearlessly exercised by the philosophic Democharès, the Athenian ambassador, who being asked, by King Philip of Macedonia, to whom he was sent, what the king could do to most gratify the Athenians, replied, "The most gratifying thing you could do would be to hang yourself." The courtiers murmured with indignation, but Philip dismissed the envoy, with the remark, that he hoped the Athenians would perceive he had more wit than their representative, seeing that he could take with indifference such a joke as that flung at him by Democharès.

There are two philosophers whose names now occur to me, and of whom some erroneous notions appear to be entertained by their posterity;—Heraclitus and Democritus. We picture them as "Jean qui pleure" and "Jean qui rit," looking on the first as made up of groans, and the latter of gaiety. The fact however is, that Heraclitus, though given, as any man might be, at any period, who thought of the matter, to weep over the wickedness of the world, made that world laugh heartily by his rough answers to the polite invitations of Darius, who would fain have had him at the Persian court. Heraclitus and Darius remind me of Brusquet and Charles V. Democritus, too, was a different man from what he is generally thought to have been. He laughed, indeed, but it was at the follies of mankind; and he did not disdain, like the weeping Ephesian, to figure at

the court of Darius. There is one sample of his wit there, which is better than anything ever uttered by Bertholdo, the philosophic buffoon at the court of Alboin, King of the Lombards. Darius was inconsolable for the loss of his wife, declaring that he was the only man who had ever known real adversity. "And I will raise the queen from the dead in a few minutes," said Democritus, "if I only ——" "If you only, *what?*" impatiently exclaimed Darius, interrupting him. "If I only can find three individuals who have passed through life without adversity of some sort, and whose names I will engrave on the queen's monument." Darius knew the case was hopeless, and mournfully smiled. If he had given a small estate to the witty philosopher, the latter would have deserved it quite as well as the Joculatores of our first William and John, whose wit or wisdom was rewarded by raising them to the very pleasant condition of holders of land.

It is said of some of the German jesters that they occasionally lived on the people of the town, with the lord of which they resided in exercise of their office. A parallel to this may be met with in the annals of the philosophers, in the person of Demonax, who, leaving to his patrons to clothe and lodge him, boarded himself in a very facetious and economical way, by entering the first house, after he felt himself hungry, and there fully satisfying his appetite. But Demonax belonged to a lower class of the order of philosophers, as some later fools did to that of the general order of their profession. There was as much difference between Demonax and Socrates, as there was between Sibilot, as described by Huguenot authors, and our own light and noble-hearted Will Sommers. The happiest idea one can have of Socrates is that of seeing him in the studio of his father Sophroniscus, carving that group of the three Graces, the simplicity and elegance of which excited universal admiration. He was ever the same,—a rough labourer patiently and cer-

tainly creating beauty. In him we fail to discern anything of the mere unlicensed jester. The Platonic and the Xenophontic Socrates may be said equally, though in different ways and measures, to challenge admiration. Leaving the philosopher, to encounter him again presently, let us look over antiquity for traces of the fool in people as in individuals.

Among the ancients, perhaps the Tirynthians had the reputation of being the very merriest of fools. Theophrastus is cited by Athenæus in proof of this. Those people of Argolis were so continually merry that they at last got tired of it, and applied to the oracle at Delphos to save them from being any longer such joyous simpletons.

"You shall be cured," said the oracular authority, "if after sacrificing an ox to Neptune, you can throw the carcase into the sea, without laughing."

"That will be easy enough," said the Tirynthians, laughing all the while, "if we can only keep children away from the sacred fire."

Of course, however, an *enfant terrible* managed to be present at the show. He was no sooner discovered than the now solemn Tirynthians began to drive him away, lest he should laugh or raise laughter during the ceremony, by some childish remark or question.

"What are you afraid of?" asked the sprightly lad,—"that I should upset the dish" (and he pointed to the sea) "that is to hold your beef?"

Poor as the joke was, it so tickled the fancy of the Tirynthians, that they laughed till their sides ached; and so they remained merry fools for ever. No jester, at a royal table, was ever so highly esteemed as an uproariously gay buffoon from this old city of Hercules—roystering Tirynthia.

The Tirynthians were never excelled, except by the people of Phæstum, who, by all other Cretans, were reckoned

as the first jesters in the world. In the days of those merry fellows, it may be observed, that the cleverest of them had to exercise their vocation on melancholy occasions. When Petronius Arbiter was committing slow suicide by alternately opening and closing his veins, nothing excited him to more laughter than the sharply comic epigrams uttered by the jokers who stood around him.

Under the cloak of folly, good service has been rendered by wise men. By feigning want of wit, the elder Brutus saved himself to save his country; revenged a wrong, and converted regal Rome into a republic. We have another notable instance in the case of Solon, who, when the Athenian law forbade mention of the subject of Salamis, that island which gave Athens such an infinite world of trouble, assumed the bearing of one out of his wits, and, in better verse than a fool could have indited, told truths that led to great consequences, and exhibited the patriotic courage and humour of the celebrated sage. Assuredly Solon was no fool, for he refused to be a king, and he invented taxation. I will revert for a moment to Aristippus, the lover of Laïs, and the flatterer of Dionysius,—the rosy philosopher who only cared for the present moment, but who had of the jester only his liberty of speech. When thrust into an inferior seat at table, and being asked, if he liked it as well as his higher place of the day before: "Ay, truly," said he to Dionysius; "for the place I held yesterday, I despise today, since I hold it no longer. I honoured the seat, the seat did not honour me. So, today's seat, which, yesterday, was without dignity, because I was not in it, is now dignified by holding me." The court laughed; but the wit and the wisdom of the speech seem to be of the very mildest nature.

That the ancients carried their idea of "fooling" too far, may be seen in the fact that, as Sir Thomas Brown observes, "some drew provocatives of mirth from anatomies, and jugglers showed tricks with skeletons." It was not any

reverend gentleman or philosopher who improved the occasion of Egyptian feasts, by showing a model mummy, but a light-hearted slave who exhibited the ivory effigy to the garlanded guests with, "Behold what we must all come to!" Antiquity went further than this in its patronage of the fool. In the funeral train, followed the arch-mime lately retained by the deceased patrician; and it was this good fellow's business to keep the mourners merry, by imitations of the speech, gesture, and manners of the deceased himself. Of this custom, the author last-named rightly says, that "it was too light for such solemnities, contradicting their funeral orations and doleful rites of the grave." The mourners must have been sadly in want of the extract of *Cachunde* or Liberans, which was once a famous and highly magnified composition, used in the East Indies, to drive away melancholy.

How highly mirth was accounted of, even in grave sport, is proved by one fact,—that Lycurgus raised an image of Laughter, and caused it to be worshipped as a God. He loved, he said, to see people merry at feasts and assemblies.

Of the professional wit, we find a trace in a curious custom of Roman gentlemen. When these discovered that learning and wit began to be in more general estimation than arms or wealth, the clever fellows among them got on well enough, and setting their minds to discipline, became the favoured guests at the most brilliant parties. The dull millionaires were rather nettled at this, but they fell upon an exquisite plan to be on an equality with their sparkling rivals. They had neither wit nor learning themselves, but they purchased slaves, and especially Greek slaves, who possessed both. Had they to attend an assembly where philosophy was most in fashion, they took with them their more learned bondsmen; but was the evening expected to be mirthful, then the stolid owners ordered the slaves with comic dispositions and merry turns of thought and expres-

sion, to accompany them. These delightful fellows were ever welcome, and when their sallies produced explosions of laughter and applause, their masters stroked their beards complacently, and assumed a modest composure, as if *they* had said all the good things uttered by their serfs.

Like the fools of later ages, these jesters were the more acceptable, because they helped mortal man to kill Time. When society was without books, it learned what it could, and amused itself as it might, by the help of philosophers, minstrels, or jesters. Printing, indeed, killed neither mirth, music, nor philosophy; but the decline of the profession of the hired fool certainly began at the period of the discovery of printing.

I might find opportunity here of saying something touching the office of the parasite, as a jester; but I have treated that subject at such length, in my "Table Traits," that I will rather refer my readers to that little volume than repeat what is said in it, here. I may notice, however, in addition, that the old classical, professional jesters, in Athens, had the privilege of entering any company, without invitation. Plautus, therefore, calls them "*Flies*." The parasite was of this profession, and there was not much civility vouchsafed towards him, if he was of the class that did not wait to be invited. The host would rudely order him to play the fool for the amusement of the company; to whom he narrated all the jokes he could remember, and when his memory ran dry, he would ignobly descend to read them from manuscripts. Maître Guillaume, a fool at the court of Henri IV., did much the same. The parasite was interested personally, as well as pecuniarily, in amusing his hearers, for if he failed to do so, they had no hesitation in rising, kicking his seat from under him, raining blows upon his body, breaking the dishes upon his head, and, fixing a rope, or collar, round his neck, flinging him headlong into the street.

Xenophon, in his account of the banquet at the marine

villa of Callias, affords us an excellent idea of the person and merits of the professional buffoon. The name of the latter is Philip. This fool by vocation, when all the gentlemen are at supper, knocks at the door, and with a rollicking sort of impudence, says to the servant who opens it, "Here we are! the gentlemen need not deliberate about letting me in to supper. I am provided with everything necessary for doing so, for nothing. My bay horse is tired with carrying nothing in his stomach, and I am quite as weary with running about to see how I can best fill my own." And then forcing his way in, he raises a laugh, by exclaiming —"Gentlemen, you all know me and my professional privilege. But I have come uninvited, chiefly because I have an aversion from ceremony; and a disinclination to put you to the trouble of a formal invitation."

Callias remarks, "We must not refuse him his dish;" and the host then welcomes the jester, by bidding him take place; for serious conversation has made the guests dull, and they will be glad of an opportunity to indulge in laughter.

Philip cut a thousand jokes without being able to tickle his hearers into laughter; and it was only when he affected to be broken-hearted and about to die with shame at his ill-success or their dulness, that they promised to try and find something risible in his professional mirth. And this must have been a very sorry joke indeed.

The best, perhaps the only tolerable scintillation of wit struck out by the "laughter-maker," is to be found, after the circus-girl who accompanies the Syracusan showman has leaped through the hoop in which knives are planted with every point towards the passing leaper. Philip has then a fling at an Athenian alderman who belonged to the Peace-party of his day:—"Ah!" he exclaims, "what pleasure should I enjoy to see Pisander, that grave counsellor, taking lessons from this girl; he that is ready to

swoon away at the sight of a lance, and says it is a barbarous cruel custom to go to war and kill men!" This is not extremely lively, but it is at least as good a joke as when he says to Socrates,. on the assertion of the philosopher that he intended to dance: "Well, I believe your thighs and shoulders are of the same weight; and that if you put the one into one scale, and the other into another, just as the constable weighs bread in the market-place, you will not be in danger of being forfeited, so justly poised will be the respective weights." And, therewith, the buffoon expresses a desire to dance with Socrates, and begins awkwardly imitating the previous graceful dancing of the girl, raising peals of mirth from the little company of nobles and sages, and ending, heated and panting, with a sly look towards the slaves standing in grim repose before the board on which was placed the wine. With a sly remark, he wishes they were like coachmen, who are the more prized for being quick in their driving and dexterous in turning. This remark, of course, sets the wine-bearers rapidly moving towards Philip and among the company generally.

This professional fool, it is to be observed, is proud of his profession. "I suppose you value yourself," says Lycon, "on your power to make men laugh?"

"Ay, truly," answers Philip;—"and have I not better reason for being proud of this, than the finical Callipides of piquing himself at making men weep at his tragic verses in the theatre?—Proud of my trade!" he subsequently exclaims, "oh, oh, I should think so; for see you, when people are in the way of good fortune, they invite me to their houses; but when misfortune or misery falls upon them, they carefully avoid meeting me." Nicerates is struck by the remark, for he is one of those men whose friends, ruined by their extravagance, expect him to extricate them from their difficulties. He sighs, when he compares his own condition with that of the fool, whose vocation at this re-

nowned banquet terminates by a taste of his craft, when he approvingly winks to the Syracusan, and, after his fashion, says *Amen* to that lucky showman's prayer, soliciting the gods to send plenty of everything, wherever he came, save of judgment and good sense.

This is his last joke, for Socrates grows weary of him and of his chattering. "But it is not proper," says Philip, a little nettled, "that we should be silent at a feast."

"Very true," replies the philosophic son of a statuary and a midwife, "but it is also true that it is better to be silent than say what it were more profitable to leave unsaid." And this very strong hint extinguishes the jester.

It is impossible to read the graphic sketch by Xenophon, taking it as a faithful account of an actual scene, without feeling wonder that an intellectual party, like the one depicted, should need, or should tolerate, such aids to enjoyment as those professed to be afforded by the buffoon and the mountebank with his pretty dancing-girl and ballet company. The wit and the wisdom are all on the side of the gentlemen, and of Socrates in particular, who, to do him justice, is quite as merry as he is wise. His wit sparkles throughout the banquet, and perhaps a hecatomb of witty fools would never have bethought themselves of giving a description so graceful, so touching, and so true, of the rich uses and the vast abuses of wine, as Socrates does at this very party. Nor is stately Xenophon himself without his joke,—as though moved by the fact of his dealing here with jesters. "When the little ballet of 'Bacchus and Ariadne' was played out," says the author, "the company found it so natural in its pantomime, that they became convinced of what had not previously entered their minds, namely that the youth and girl who had represented the chief characters were actually in love with one another. This," adds Xenophon, "caused the guests who were married, and some who were not, to mount their horses forthwith, and ride full

speed to Athens, with the briskest resolutions imaginable." But while the husbands went home to greet their spouses, and lovers to pay homage to their respective Lalages, some stayed behind—Socrates was of the number—and these "went a-walking with Lycon, Autolicus, and Callias." But the fool went not with the philosopher, the nobles, and the young Autolicus, who had won a prize at the Olympic Games,—and, consequently, we must keep in the company with which we are bound to journey.

This species of company was not equally pleasant to all men. Athenæus tells us that the Scythian Anacharsis was once present at a banquet, at which a number of professional fools did their office so drolly, that every one laughed,—save the Scythian. Presently, a monkey was introduced, and at this animal's singular tricks, Anacharsis laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. As some surprise was expressed at this, by the company, the Scythian justified himself by remarking,—"The monkey is comic and risible by nature, and without effort; but man is so only by art and affectation." In a similar sense, Athenæus quotes a passage from Euripides, in which the poet says:—"There are numerous people who study the art of raising laughter by witty speeches and sparkling repartees. For my part, I hate these elaborate buffoons, whose unrestrained tongue spares not the wise, and whom, indeed, I do not reckon worthy of being accounted among 'men.'"

In the days of King Philip, the Macedonian, whenever a man told an extremely witty story, he was pretty sure to be met with the remark, "Ah, that comes from the Sixty." It was as much as doubting the originality of the wit. "The Sixty" was, in fact, a club of wits. They met in Athens, not at a tavern, but in the temple of Hercules. We should as soon expect to hear of a convivial body of wits assembling every Saturday night in "Rowland Hill's Chapel." They were fellows who had the very highest

opinion of their own abilities, for they regularly entered in a book all the witticisms of the evening. This was, probably, the very first jest-book ever put together. To listen to it, when the Secretary took it with him to private parties, must have been an antepast of '*Punch*.' The precious book has perished, but Athenæus has preserved the names of a few of the members, which, however, are not worth repeating, though it may be stated, that the owners had also nicknames; and one tall, clever, nimble fellow, Callimedes, was familiarly hailed by his fellow-clubbists as "the Grasshopper." Philip heard of this merry, social, witty company, and longing to know more of them, their sayings and doings, he did not indeed invite them to his distant court, but he sent them a talent (nearly £200 sterling), and requested the loan of the last volume of the transactions of the "Sixty Club." The book was duly despatched; and perhaps the loan of a volume was never paid for at so high a rate: the authors thus played the part of court fools by deputy. Their jokes were stereotyped, and had a long and merry life of it. It was useless for any man to fire one off as his own, for the source was instantly discovered, and the company would derisively call out, "An Old Sixty!" just as dull retailers of faded jests are suppressed, in our own day, by the cry of, "An Old Joe!"

Philip is said to have possessed his own court fool in Clisophus. Flögel says, that the latter excited shouts of laughter by his imitations of his royal master's style, voice, manner, and even infirmities. But, according to Athenæus, Clisophus seems to have been a parasite, who imitated his patron out of flattery, and did not mimic him in order to excite risibility. At other courts there were mimics who played the fool before their sovereign lords, by caricatured imitations of fencers, singers, and even orators,—especially of their defects. The most celebrated, perhaps, was Hero-

dotus, a burly namesake of the father of history, who kept the court of Antiochus ever merry by his mimicry, and who was named, *par excellence*, Logomimus.

The fools and the philosophers were not always identical, and they often came in contact, as was to be expected. We have an instance in the buffoon Satyrion, named by Lucian, and the grave Alcidamas, who wrote a treatise on death. The sage could not tolerate the fun and the Egyptian accent of the ugly and close-cropped fool; and when the latter called the man of wisdom a "lap-dog," the philosopher challenged him to single combat. Some of the guests were ashamed, and some laughed, to see sciolist and sage heartily belabouring each other; but the laughter was universal when the philosopher, beaten to a mummy, confessed himself vanquished, and afterwards stood as mute as a courtesan in a Greek play.

Socrates (as I have previously remarked) is said, by more than one writer, ancient and modern, to have united in his own person the philosopher and the fool. His ugliness, deformity, and uncouthness,—his childish play, his extravagant dancing, his inclination to laugh at everything,—all these and more have been cited as foundations for reckoning him among the jesters. Zeno, according to Cicero, especially styled him the "Athenian buffoon," which was probably meant for a compliment. The best description of him is that of Alcibiades, in Plato, who says that Socrates resembled the large images of Silenus, which were filled with little statuettes of the gods. Flögel rejects the picture of Socrates, represented by Aristophanes in the 'Clouds,' as "suspicious." But Socrates has nothing of the fool in him in that play, except that he is represented as proprietor of the Thinking-Shop, and deriving powers of humbug and circumlocution, from the clouds. In this play, the recognized freedom of the fool, as regards liberty of speech at the expense of the audience, is exercised by the characters

"Just Cause" and "Unjust Cause," as the following sample will show:—

"*Unj.* Now, then, tell me: from what class do the lawyers come?

"*Just.* From the blackguards.

"*Unj.* Very good! And the public speakers?

"*Just.* Oh, from the blackguards, also.

"*Unj.* ——And now look; which class most abounds among the audience?

"*Just.* I am looking.

"*Unj.* But what do you see?

"*Just.* By all the gods, I see more blackguards than anything else. That fellow, I particularly know; and him yonder; and that blackguard with the long hair."

The above was the true license of the fool, in the professional use of the term; and the Athenian blackguards only laughed to hear themselves thus distinguished.

The above is among the boldest of the personal assaults made by Aristophanes against the vices or failings of his countrymen. He claimed the privileges of Comedy, as the Fool did those of his cap and bells. This he does, especially in 'The Acharnians,' when Dicæopolis, looking straight at the audience, says, "Think nothing the worse of me, Athenian gentlemen, if, although I am a beggar, I hazard touching on your affairs of state, in comic verse; for even comedy knows what is proper, and, if you find me sharp, you shall also find me just." Still nearer did the poet come to the license of the jester, when, in 'The Knights,' he himself turns actor as well as author, and so dressed, looked, and mimicked, without once employing the name of, the great demagogue whom he was satirizing, that every spectator recognized the well-known Cleon. The same author's attack on the litigious spirit of the Athenians, in his 'Wasps,' is another instance of what I am attempting to illustrate. This is more particularly the case when he makes his characters

address themselves immediately to the audience, as may be supposed to occur in the Parabasis of the last-named piece. Here the satirist bids the audience to provide themselves with clearer understandings, if they would enjoy the poets thoroughly. "Henceforth, good gentlemen," are his words, "have more love and regard for such of your poets as treat you to something original. Preserve their sayings, and keep them in your chests with your apples. If you do this, there will be a scent of cleverness from your clothes, that shall last you through a whole year." In his 'Peace,' the finest touch of satire is not in what is said, but in what is left unsaid; for the goddess whose name gives a title to the piece, never once opens her mouth. The licensed jester appears as broadly in the author's dealings with the gods, whose place in Heaven is represented as occupied by the Demon of War, who is engaged in braying the Greek States in a stupendous mortar. The daring of the author, as exercised in pelting the gods themselves with jokes, is still more flagrant in 'The Birds,' where he burlesques the national mythology, in presence of a people whose jealous fury was just then aroused by suspicion of a conspiracy existing against the national religion. That the audience should have tolerated the audacity of their favourite jester, is a proof of the power he held over them. Nevertheless, they were probably more delighted with his personalities, and they recognized with shouts of laughter the brace of gallant military gentlemen thus described by one of the women in the 'Lysistrata':—"By Jove, I saw a man with long hair, a commander of cavalry, on horseback, who was pouring into his brazen helmet a lot of pease-soup, which he had just bought from an old woman. I saw also a Thracian, with shield and javelin, like Tereus. He went up to the woman who sold figs, and, frightening her away with his arms, took up her ripe figs and began swallowing them." The national satirist is seen again in the recommendation put in the mouth of the male chorus in

the same play, and which is to this effect:—"If the Athenians would only follow my advice, their ambassadors should never go upon their missions, except when drunk. Sobriety and Common Sense do not go together with us. If, for instance, we send sober legates to Sparta, they only watch for opportunity to create mischief. If the Spartans speak, we do not heed them; if they are silent, we wrongly suspect them. Let our envoys get drunk, and agree in what they hear, and in the reports they send home." Nor does Aristophanes spare the women more than the men. How archly, no doubt, did Mnesilochus look at the audience, when he ungallantly remarked, in 'The Thesmophoriazusæ,'—"Among all the ladies of the present day, you would seek in vain to find a Penelope. They are Phædras, every one of them." It is not to be supposed that the comic poet ever offended by his trenchant jests, although a passage delivered by the chorus, in 'The Ecclesiazusæ' (that exquisite satire against the ideal republics of philosophers, with impracticable laws), would seem, perhaps, to imply something of the sort. Turning to the audience, the Chorus remarks, "I am going to make a little suggestion to you. I wish the clever among you to be on my side; for remember how clever I am myself. They who laugh merrily will prefer me, I know, because of my own mirthful jesting." This suggestion sounds as if the dunces and dullards had been sneering at the satirist for his smartness and sprightliness. Even if so, he continued to laugh at gods and men. At both, as in 'Plutus,' where he ridicules the deities for their many names, by which they hoped to catch a gift under one appellation, which they lost under another; and where he illustrates the irreligiousness of men, by remarking that nowadays they never enter a temple, except for a purpose which, it will be recollected, was religiously avoided by the Essenes on the Sabbath. The last illustration is made in the very spirit and letter which marked the "Fools" of the

fifteenth century. *They* pleaded for such jokes the immunities of their office, and Aristophanes does something very like this when he makes Xanthias exclaim, in 'The Frogs,' "Oh, they are always carrying baggage in comedy!"

Flögel has been too anxious to increase his list of Fools, by including among them the *planus*, or impostor. He takes for a joker, the cheat denounced by Horace in the 17th of the First Book of his Epistles. That cheat is simply a street vagabond, who deceives the humane by pretending to have broken his leg, and who laughs at them when they have passed on, after giving him relief. Even this sorry joke he cannot often repeat. Then we have, from Athenæus, other comical fellows cited, whose funny things won the admiration of Greece and Rome, the people of which countries must have been easily pleased. Among these are the Alexandrian Matreas, who wrote chapters of a 'Comic Natural History,' wherein he discussed such questions as, "Why, when the sun sets at sea, does he not set off swimming?" "Why do the swans never get drunk with what they imbibe?" Then we hear of a Cephisodorus,—neither the tragic poet nor the historian,—whose stock joke consisted in his running breathless, either from or towards the city honoured by his residence, and with an air of frantic terror, informing all whom he passed or encountered, of some awful calamity. It is hardly possible to imagine that people laughed more than once, *if* once, at a sorry fool like this. Not much more risible was that Pantaleon, who was wont to address strangers in the street in tirades of bombastic nonsense, utterly meaningless and incomprehensible. The joke was for the standers-by, who knew Pantaleon, and enjoyed the astounded look of those whom he addressed. According to Athenæus, the last comicality of Pantaleon was in imposing on his two sons, whom he called separately to his side, when dying, and confidentially told each where he would find a hidden treasure. When they had looked for

this in vain, they probably understood why their respectable sire had died laughing. Many of this class of fools can only be considered as "hoaxers." Such was another Cephisodorus, who disgraced his dignified name by very undignified tricks,—as when he hired a host of hardy day-labourers, and gave them rendezvous in such a narrow street that, when all were assembled, it was impossible to move either backward or forward. The "Berners Street Hoax," by Theodore Hook, was entirely after the fashion of Cephisodorus, and was not the more excusable on that account.

Forcatulus, a learned writer on law, accepts as true a story, very like one to be found in Rabelais, and which Flögel quotes from another accomplished jurist, Accursius. It is a story in which ignorance is made to pass for wisdom, and is therefore, although common, yet not quite so excellent a joke as it would pretend to be; and is to this effect:—

The Romans sent an ambassador to Greece, in order to procure a copy of the Laws of the twelve Tables. The Greeks would make no such costly gift till they were satisfied that the petitioners had men amongst them who could comprehend the wisdom of the Laws. They despatched an envoy to look into the matter; and when the Romans heard of him and his purpose, they resolved to defeat him by means of a fool. They clothed the latter in purple, surrounded him with a guard of honour, and dismissed him to encounter the accomplished ambassador from Greece, with one single point of instruction,—he was on no account to open his mouth.

The Athenian commissioner, seeing the representative of Roman wisdom standing before him, grave and speechless, observed, with a smile, "I understand. The gentleman is a Pythagorean, and carries on an argument only by signs. With all my heart!" And, thereupon he raised a single finger, to imply that there was only one principle of nature in the universe.

The simpleton sent by Rome, not dreaming that this was the opening of a philosophical argument, but looking upon it rather as a menace, extended two fingers and a thumb towards the Greek, as if about to take him by the nose.

"Good! very good!" murmured the Athenian. "He shows me the Pythagorean Trias,—the triple-God in one, I must intimate that I understand him;"—and the philosophical envoy approached the stolid Roman, with the flat of his hand extended towards him. He intended thereby to imply that the divine Trias was the upholder of all things. The Roman, however, thinking it an approximation to a box on the ear, drew back a step, lifted his doubled fist, and awaited the coming of the Greek.

The face of the latter was covered by a radiant smile. He could only exclaim, "Perfect! charming! divine! The silent sage tells me that the divine supporter of all things is in himself All-mighty. Admirably done! a nation with such sages *must* be worthy of laws enacted by the leaders of civilization."

Now if this story be, as Forcatulus will have it, historically true, I must add that it has been improved in the hands of the story-tellers. These, of course, have made it a Christian disputation, in which the hired fool has but one eye. The real metaphysician reads in the signs of the simpleton the whole Christian revelation, but the story is improved by the fool's own description of the matter. "When I saw him raise one finger, I thought he mocked me, as having but one eye; and I held out two fingers, meaning that my single eye was as good as his two. But when he, therefore, held out three fingers, signifying that there were only three eyes between us, I doubled my fist, to knock him down for his insolence."

Among the old class of jesters some writers rank the *Aretalogi*, who appear to have been improvisers of merry or wonderful stories for the amusement of a company, by

whom they were invited, or hired. Juvenal says that when Ulysses, at the table of Alcinous, described the person and deeds of the cannibal Polyphemus, some of the guests turned pale, while the narrator, to others seemed only a jester:

"Risum fortasse quibusdam
Moverat mendax Aretalogus;"

or, as the Jesuit Tarteron translates this passage,—"Les autres pâmoient de rire, et regardoient Ulysse comme un diseur de contes faits à plaisir." Some of the guests, in fact, laughed at Ulysses as they would have done at a regular romancer.

Again, Suetonius, in the 74th chapter of his Life of Augustus, after describing the pleasant social customs of the emperor, his agreeable company, and his courteous and affable manner with them, adds that, to encourage their mirth and their freedom, "aut acroamata et histriones, aut etiam triviales ex circo ludios interponebat, ac frequentius aretalogos." To show the value of this last word, according to English writers, I turn to an old translation of Suetonius, published in 1692, and there I find that, "for mirth's sake, Augustus would often have at his table either some to tell stories, or players, or common Merry Andrews out of the Circus, but more frequently *boasting pedagogues and maintainers of paradoxes.*"

It might easily be concluded that the Aretalogus was really of the number of professional jesters, were it not that I find Lampridius quoted by Flögel as including Ulpian in this class, because he sat at the table of Alexander Severus, "ut haberet fabulas literales." But it is almost impossible to admit of this, for the wise Ulpian was the solemn president of the Imperial Council of State, a great lawyer, a great reformer, a moral and a religious man, according to the light possessed by him. He was, as it seems to me, rather the Mentor than the Jester of Severus, who was, for

a time, the bright example of men,—of any and every rank. The imperial virtues were held to be the result of the teaching and practices of Ulpian. To his frugal table the Emperor invited men of learning and virtue, and Ulpian was invariably of the number. So far, however, was the profound jurisconsult from being a mere jester, that, as we are told, the pauses in the pleasing and instructive conversation of himself and fellow-guests "were occasionally enlivened by the recital of some pleasing composition, which," says Gibbon, "supplied the place of the dancers, comedians, and even gladiators, so frequently summoned to the tables of the rich and luxurious Romans." That there was little or nothing of the conceited Aretalogus in Ulpian, may be seen in the fact that his virtue was of too stern a quality, and that he was slain by the Prætorian guards because he was more wise than merry.

We next come to the *Scurra*, a jester, of whom we find an illustration in ancient comedy. When the witnesses called by Agorastocles (in the 'Pœnulus' of Plautus) pompously order Collybiscus to walk in their rear, that personage remarks,

"Faciunt scurræ quod consuerunt; pone sese homines locant."

"They act exactly like buffoons, who put every man behind them;" in which we see something of the ordinarily insolent character of these individuals.

Yet they are themselves said to have been originally the "followers" in the retinue of great men, and their name, Scurra, or *Sequura*, is derived by some lexicographers from 'sequi,' to follow. Their wit was sharp but polished, and to be scurrilous, in the olden time, was rather a credit than a disgrace; and if the enemies of Cicero called him the *scurra consularis*, it was not that they found his sarcasms coarse, but that they felt them penetrating and fatal.

The *Scurræ*, however, seem to have sunk to a level with

the common buffoons, as we collect from the letter of Pliny to Genitor (l. ix. ep. 17). Pliny's friend had written to him to express his disgust at a splendid entertainment where he had been a guest, being marred by the jokes, antics, and wiles of the professional *scurræ*, *cinædi*, and *moriones*. The difference between the first and the last who belonged to the profession of fools, consisted in this,—the Scurra professed the art of exciting his hearers to risibility by extravagant yet sparkling wit. The Morio worked more quietly, and as if he joked licentiously by natural disposition thereto. It is worthy of observation that Pliny rather chides his friend. He writes, substantially, in reply, "Pray smooth your brow. I do not hire such fellows myself, but I do not turn up my nose at those who follow a contrary fashion. There is nothing novel or grateful to me in the hackneyed gestures of the wanton, the pleasantry of the jester, or the nonsense of the fool." And the philosopher adds, with great fairness, "You see it is not so much my judgment as my taste that is against them;" and, he says further, "When I have reading, music, or the company of an actor at my own house, there are some guests who leave directly, or who, if they stay, look as 'glumpy' at the diversions I provide, as you did at those which lately marred your entertainment. The truth is," thus concludes the philosopher, and it is advice as valuable now as ever, "we should accept, as well-meant, the diversions provided for us by others, that they, in their turn, may be indulgent towards those we provide for them." One thing noteworthy here is, that the sensible people in Rome did not really care for the "fool." If the conquest of Scipio Asiaticus over Antiochus brought in that sort of entertainment, the *best* philosophers (for some stooped to folly) protested against it by both precept and example.

The Scurra, as I have said, was not in every age a polished fool. The buffoon at the fair who obtained the applause of

his audience for grunting like a pig, and, as the audience thought, more like a pig than the animal itself, is called by Phædrus a "Scurra." He probably sank lower in his practice than any of his class, for he announced that the entertainment he was about to exhibit had never before been known on any stage. But even the best of the Scurræ seem to me to justify rather the censure of Genitor than the praise of Horace. The latter, it will be remembered, on the famous journey to Brundusium, was present at the cudgelling of brains between Sarmentus (who had run away from slavery to set up as a Scurra) and Cicerrus, who was a well-to-do parasite of his day. Horace asserts that the wit of these two induced them all to merrily prolong their supper; and yet all the fun perpetrated was of a dreary cast. The Scurra joked coarsely on the deformity and infirmity of the parasite, and the latter retorted by reproaching the Scurra with his condition of slave, and the puny insignificance of his body. If Sarmentus was the "delight" of Cæsar Augustus, that monarch was very easily pleased.

Perhaps there was no greater patron of the Scurræ, and all similar and many more degraded persons, than Sylla. He wasted his colossal fortune on fools of every description, —some of them monsters of uncleanness. Flögel, when noticing the criminal liberality of Sylla towards the crowds of debauched followers who occupied his table and house, and accompanied him abroad, says that for their sakes and under their influences, he neglected public business. But the fact is, that Sylla did not lead this disreputable life until after he had abdicated the dictatorship, and had gone into his sensual and unhappy retirement at Puteoli.

Antony was not more choice than Sylla in his "jolly companions," nor in his own conduct. He was often indeed his own fool, and few great men ever played that character so thoroughly, but all were not fools and jesters and jugglers, whom historians have placed round the table and at

the hearth of Antony. Flögel especially errs in classing among the jugglers retained by the Triumvir the beautiful Cytheris, or Lycoris, that slave whom the gentle and gallant Gallus loved, but whose desertion of him for Antony gained for us the tender eclogue of Virgil.

Juvenal cites with Sarmentus, the name of Galba as a buffoon or parasite of Augustus, and he does this (Sat. v.) in order to shame a dissolute friend who saw no harm in allowing his "loins to grow fat by others' meat." "What!" exclaims the Satirist, "are you not yet ashamed of your course of life? Can you still believe that sovereign happiness consists in living at another man's table,—where you support more insults than were ever heaped on Sarmentus and Galba at the table of Cæsar?"

Galba was an aristocratic Demonax. He was, moreover, a short hump-backed fellow, and he seems rather to have been the cause of wit in others than witty himself. It was in allusion to his deformity that Augustus remarked, after Galba had maintained some absurd proposition, "I can tell you what is right, yet I can't put you straight." It is of Galba that is told the story of his feigning to go to sleep at his own table while Mæcenas was saying very polite things to the host's wife; but when another of the guests attempted to filch something from the board, "Hold there!" cried Galba, "I am asleep for him, but not for you!"

Martial complains that he himself was less known to his contemporaries, all witty poet as he was, than Caballus, the buffoon of Tiberius. This individual is supposed to be the same with the Claudius Gallus of Suetonius. But Gallus seems to have been as much of a friend as a man could be, of an Emperor who was accustomed to behead such of his acquaintances as got the better of him in argument. That Gallus was hardly a professional fool may be gathered from the words of Suetonius, according to the quaint translation of the edition of 1692. "Claudius Gallus, a most notorious

old Sir Jolly, who had been formerly branded for his debauches by Augustus, and severely reprimanded by himself (Tiberius) in the Senate, inviting him (Tiberius) to supper, he promised to come, on the terms that nothing were omitted of his usual way of entertainment,"—which, according to the context, seems to have been of a terribly licentious character.

Flögel refers, for an example of the impunity of Court Fools, in the bold wagging of their tongue at the Courts of the Roman Emperors, to the remark of a jester to Vespasian. The former had been saying sharp things to all around him, but, observed the Emperor, "you have addressed no observation to me." Now Vespasian, whom we are accustomed to picture to ourselves as a towering personage of heroic carriage, was a poorly built fellow who went about in a half-sitting posture, like Mr. Wright in the part of the retired coachman, whose limbs have stiffened into the posture which he had preserved through a long course of years, on the box. The jester joked very indecently on this weakness of the monarch, but I do not think the sorry humourist was a wit by profession. "Quidam urbanorum," is the way in which he is described, but this may mean "one of the men about town," and the old translation from which I have already made an extract, renders it "one of the wits of the time." Whichever it be, it seems to show that the jokers could take great liberties with some emperors. Other instances prove that some emperors took deadly vengeance on the jokers.

Commodus Antoninus may be reckoned among those princes who have been their own fools, and he played the part rarely; but it was more in the spirit of insane than witty folly. His fun, like the club of Hercules, which he for ever carried on his shoulder, was crushing rather than exhilarating. Gallienus, who resembled him in many respects, and was as cruel, licentious, depraved, and cold-

hearted, kept a second table for his buffoons; which they occupied like regular gentlemen of the Imperial household. When this potentate played the fool for his own amusement, he could be, by caprice at least, less bloodthirsty in his frolicsomeness than Commodus; as, for instance, when he ordered a knave of a jeweller to be flung into the arena, and let loose upon him—not a roaring lion, but a poor capon. The joke, as poor as the bird, was, of course, received with universal applause.

We have some insight afforded us with regard to the position occupied by the retained jester, in the account of the strange supper given by Nasidienus to Mæcenas and others. The guest just named took with him his two "shadows" uninvited. They were expected to contribute to the hilarity of the feast, and they occupied the same couch with their patron, the latter reclining between them. Nasidienus was in the same way supported by his two parasites, one of whom excited the mirth of the company by swallowing whole cheesecakes at once, like a clown in a pantomime; and the other extolled the dishes generally. These two, however, drank little or nothing; they appear to have been trained to spare their master's wine. The guests and *their* parasites observed no such temperance, but tippled freely, and one of the latter especially kept up the laughter of the visitors by mock compliments on the feast, and mock sentiment on things, generally.

The *Morio*, as I have previously observed, was usually a mis-shapen creature, a sort of monstrous imbecile, heavy and hideous in body, and childish in mind; a simpleton, whose naturally foolish remarks contrasted with his strength and rude shape of body. Ladies in the olden time kept them, as ladies of a later period kept monkeys, for their amusement in their own chambers. There was even a market for them, and at the *Forum Morionum*, a thoroughly frightful and foolish animal of this species would fetch about eighty pounds sterling.

Many Emperors, too, bought specimens of these monstrosities, a fashion which was only less hideous than the mania of a later time for china monsters, who exonerated their stomachs of the liquor required by their mistresses. Heliogabalus was a prodigal amateur of the former kind of property; and it has been suggested that an imbecile Morio was kept by a dull owner, that his own stupidity might seem wit by comparison.

That a noble Roman maintained slaves whose wit should entertain himself and his friends, we know from several instances. The same slaves were also employed to lighten the last hours, and to render death easy to their masters,—if they could. Nay, it must be confessed that it seems they sometimes succeeded. Witness the case of Petronius Arbiter, that magnificent Consul, who almost renders vice attractive, like Boccaccio, by writing of it in choice and elegant (yet mournful) phraseology. When that very superb gentleman was stretched on his death-couch, he might have remarked, with the Irish squire, that he died in perfect ease of mind, for he had never denied himself anything. But Petronius could not die easily without a little stimulant. He felt himself *ennuyé*, and he sent for his wittiest friends and his choicest slaves. Of the latter he freed some and whipped others, and he found a mild pleasure in both. But the dearest solace of this dying Roman noble was in the amusing stories and ridiculous epigrams recited to him. With these he amused his fancy till his jaws suddenly fixed in a fit of laughter, and the jesters around look down upon a corpse. Thus died an accomplished Roman gentleman A.D. 66.

But we are departing from the official fool, of whom it is said, that, with his place and privileges properly marked in a household, he was not known in Europe till the period of the Lower Empire. It is certain that the stern Attila brought professional jesters, as well as irresistible warriors, with him

across the Roman frontiers. When the ambassadors of Theodosius the Younger were entertained at a banquet by the Hun, the pomp, gravity, and tremendous drinking were accompanied by an immoderate amount of foolery. "A Moorish and a Scythian buffoon," says Gibbon, "successively excited the mirth of the rude spectators, by their deformed figure, ridiculous dress, antic gestures, absurd speeches, and the strange unintelligible confusion of the Latin, the Gothic, and the Hunnic languages; and the hall resounded with loud and licentious peals of laughter. In the midst of this intemperate riot, Attila alone, without a change of countenance, maintained his stern and inflexible gravity." We hear, too, of the presence of a Harlequin at the state ceremonies of the great barbarian and dignified chief. It is, however, indisputable that the professional, though perhaps not exactly the court fool, was known in Rome nearly two hundred years before the period of Attila. To do honour to the accession of Gallienus (when Valerian was alive, but a captive in Persia), numbers of Persian prisoners were paraded at the festival in Rome. At this festival, certain buffoons, we are told, committed an act of audacity for which the common crowd of spectators had not courage. They crossed over among the prisoners, and curiously and deliberately scanned the features of every man there. "Gallienus," as I have noticed in 'Monarchs Retired from Business,' "expected some mirth, but seeing nothing come of it, and that the buffoons were retiring with a disconsolate look, he asked the meaning of the episode. 'Well,' said they, with a little hesitation, 'we went over to these Persians to see if we might discover among them the great Valerian, your gracious divinity's father.' Gallienus thought this a very sorry joke indeed. He ordered the buffoons to be bound together, and to be burnt alive in one batch. It was a very serious matter to joke with, and it was a mortal matter to joke against, this Emperor of Rome."

We come to a later illustration in the Baron de Reiffenburg's book ('Le Lundi,' p. 251), where it is stated that Theophilus, Emperor of Constantinople, found pleasure in witnessing the follies of a jester, Danderi, whose spirit of curiosity led him to the discovery that the Empress Theodora had little images in her oratory to which she prayed. The fool was not cunning in betraying the secret to the Iconoclast husband of Theodora. The Empress, more crafty, persuaded Theophilus that the images were only dolls, for the amusement of their children. So, at least, says the legend, which does discredit to the most accomplished of Eastern Emperors, though he had a hatred for trade, and a love for gaudy toys and jewellery.

Before leaving this part of my subject, let me notice another Court appendage from which ancient monarchs drew incentives to mirth,—namely, the Dwarfs. These sometimes rank among the *Moriones*, and as they formed a portion of the Court household, parents often made dwarfs of their children, by stunting their growth, in order to obtain profit by them. The most clever exhibited their little prowess, in full armour, in mimic fights which sometimes terminated seriously to the combatants, in wounds of certain gravity. Augustus did not disdain either to converse, or gossip rather, and play at various games with them ;—or to listen to them chattering and see them playing with each other. By some writers, this taste of Augustus is denied, but it may be believed, since of one dwarf, Lucius, he had a statue sculptured, the eyes of which were of precious stones. That these little personages sometimes exercised great influence may be seen in a passage of the sixty-first chapter of the Tiberius (in Suetonius's "Lives"), wherein it is said :—"A person of Consular dignity, in his Annals, has this passage, that at a great feast, where he himself was also present, the question was put suddenly and loudly to Tiberius by a dwarf, who was standing in waiting

near the table among the dirty buffoons (*'inter copreas'*), 'Why Paconius, who had been condemned for treason, was still living?'" Suetonius adds indeed that the dwarf was sent to prison for being impertinent, but also that Tiberius, thus reminded of the existence of an enemy, sent orders to the Senate, that speedy care might be taken for his execution. Domitian was the Emperor who especially delighted in putting arms into the hands of his dwarfs, and setting them to pink out each other's little lives. From the Court the fashion reached wealthy people generally, and Dio, in his 'History of Rome,' tells us of these small personages being kept by Roman ladies, in whose rooms they ran about all day long, and perfectly naked. The fashion did not cease till after the accession of Alexander Severus, who drove from his Court the whole tribe of dwarfs, male and female, and indeed other equally unseemly appendages to the household of a grave and dignified prince. They became matters of attraction to the mob, and being vulgar, are no more heard of in the palaces of kings and the mansions of nobles, till a later period and in highly civilized Christian courts. Let us do with them as Alexander Severus did, and consider now the condition of the more modern Court Fool, though in doing so we may have to look occasionally to a more remote antiquity than that at which I close this Chapter. It will perhaps be found that kings and their fools must, for a time, have had a rather pleasant time of it. "He," so ran an old proverb quoted by Seneca, "he who thinks to achieve every object that enters his head, must either be a born king or a born fool." Herein, it is supposed, is intimated the proximity in degrees of happiness of the respective individuals, who could neither be called to account for things done nor for words uttered.

THE FOOL BY RIGHT OF OFFICE.

When Erasmus praised Folly, it was only by making Folly advocate her own cause. After all, her pleading neither recommends her cause, nor says much for the wit of the pleader. Folly, in the abstract, has been denounced alike by Scripture and ancient heathen sages. "All men are fools," was once a received text. Over the text, some have laughed, some have cried, and upon it, or its equivalent, divines have preached sermons now mirthful now melancholy. "If I wish to look at a fool," says Seneca modestly, "I have not far to go. I have only to look in a mirror." A sharper saying still was once uttered by Rhodius, a physician of Marburg, who had adorned the front of his house with full-length portraits of all the lawyers and doctors in the city, himself in the centre, and all in the dress of the professional buffoon. "You have a large number of thorough fools painted on your walls," once remarked a passer-by. "Ay, ay," rejoined Rhodius, "but there are still more who pass this way and look at them." He was something of the opinion of Schuppius of Hamburg, who used to remark that in this world, the fools outnumbered the men; and the Emperor Maximilian II. delicately expressed a similar sentiment when he observed that every young fellow must be pulled by fools' strings, for seven years, and that if, during that time, he forgot himself for an instant, he had to re-commence his seven years' service. This potentate distinguished the dullest of his counsellors by the title of the King of Fools. On once addressing a prosy adviser by this title, the gentleman neatly enough replied, "I wish, with all my heart, I

were King of Fools; I should have a glorious kingdom of it, and your Imperial Majesty would be among my subjects."

The "Fool" was not the exclusive possession of a Sovereign King. In course of time, wealthy individuals prided themselves in their own jesters, as ladies of the last century did in their black foot-boys and monkeys. Counts, Cardinals, Barons, and even Bishops had their professional makers of mirth. In France the *Fou du Roi* was an official title, and Champagne is thought by some to have enjoyed the monopoly of furnishing his Gallic Majesty with a new *Fou du Roi en titre d'office*, when the old one died. The profession, in most Courts, survived the name; and the office has been exercised by many gentlemen who, perhaps, little thought of the duty they were performing. The office has not seldom been filled, as I have before remarked, by the Court poet; and the well-known epigram on Cibber, the above fact being considered, has a happy application.

The term itself however has often been mis-applied. Thus Charles the *Simple* was no fool, but a man of extraordinary simplicity of mind and feeling. So Homer, when he called Telemachus, Νήπιος, a *fool*, or "silly," did not employ it as a term of reproach, but one of endearment.

The term "fool," "fol," "fou," is said to be of Northern origin. Every language, however, or nearly so, has an original word expressive of the office.

Some French writers deduce the term Fool,—that is their own word *Fol* or *Fou*,—from the Game of Chess. In the French game, the pieces which we call *Bishops*, are called "Fous;" and in anciently carved sets are represented in the fool's dress;—hence the saying of Regnier in his 14th Satire:—

"Les Fous sont aux échecs les plus proches des Rois."

Thomas Hyde, in his 'De Ludis Orientalibus,' lib. i. 4, does away with this derivation by remarking that the chess term *Fou* or *Fol* is derived from the eastern word *Phil*, an "Ele-

phant;"—he adds that two figures of this animal were always to be seen on the old boards; and that they had the oblique move of our "bishops." This is no doubt true. The line of Regnier, however, indicates the place of the "Fou," not only at chess, but at Court—namely, always near the King. The dignity of the latter, however, was preserved by a simple arrangement, namely, the ranking as "fool" or of deranged wit, every one who ventured to utter to his superior a disagreeable truth. As for a closer connection between kings and fools, it is marked by Rabelais, who observes that wearers of crown and sceptre are born under the same constellation as the wearers of cap and bells.

And this office, it is to be observed, was partly in fashion as being a good sanitary system; "Laugh and grow fat" is a popular saying, with much philosophy therein. "Laughter," says the Prussian Professor, Hufeland, "is one of the most important helps to digestion with which we are acquainted; and the custom in vogue among our ancestors, of exciting it by jesters and buffoons, was founded on true medical principles. Cheerful and joyous companions are invaluable at meals; obtain such, if possible, for the nourishment received amid mirth and jollity, is productive of light and healthy blood."

Walter Scott, when discussing, in a note to 'Ivanhoe,' the question whether Negroes were known in England at the period of that romantic story, cites an instance, whereby he not only establishes an affirmative, but proves that the professional jesters were of value to their patrons in other ways besides exciting their laughter and improving their digestion. "John of Rampayne," he tells us, "an excellent juggler and minstrel" (words implying the professional jester), "undertook to effect the escape of one Andulf de Bracy by presenting himself in disguise at the Court of the King where he was confined." For this purpose "he stained his hair and his whole body entirely as black as jet, so that nothing was

white but his teeth. And succeeded in imposing himself on the King, as some Ethiopian minstrel. He effected by stratagem the escape of the prisoner. Negroes therefore must have been known in England in the dark ages." When the joyous brotherhood could perform services of this nature we need not be surprised that prelates as well as princes entertained them, and that the Council of Paris, in 1212, in vain denounced churchmen who were worldly enough to maintain fools in their households.

The idea that fools were instituted in order to supply the wants of a free society is, perhaps, not so strictly true as that they were gradually allowed to go out of fashion because their licensed freedom of expression was calculated to lead to social liberty. At first, a sarcasm from an equal may have only been considered as an insult; "yet conversation," says Southey, "wanted its pepper and vinegar and mustard," and so Fools were allowed to make the seasoning. When freedom of speech became vulgar (that is, popular or general), the Fool, as such, began to disappear. The term is sometimes applied in a singular sense. Thus "Fools' Pence" was the name given to a tax once levied on the astrologers of Alexandria, because of the gain of their own ingenious folly derived from fools.

It is to be observed too that people themselves have been as sovereigns who possessed their witty fools to teach them lessons of wisdom. Such servants of the public are to be recognised in Menenius Agrippa, when he taught the rebellious commons the respective duties of governors and governed, by repeating to them the apt allegory of "The Belly and the Members;" and in Themistocles, when, to the over-taxed citizens who wished to introduce a new element into the government, he wittily told, how once a fox entangled in a bog, was soon covered by flies who sucked nearly half the blood out of his body. A hedgehog who came near, politely offered to drive the flies away. "No, no," said the

sly yet suffering fox, "if these be driven away who are well-nigh glutted, there will come a new, hungry set, ten times more greedy and devouring." Another sample we have in the case of Sertorius, who showed how much wit was better than strength, by citing the case of two men who were set to see who could get off the tail of a horse in the shortest time. One pulled at the whole tail, and pulled in vain. The other easily conquered by taking the tail of *his* horse and plucking out the hairs, one at a time. There was very much of this sort of instruction imparted by "fools" to princes, and by enlightened men to people, when prince and people equally objected to have their prejudices bruised by the bitter balsam of advice.

In the courts of princes and the houses of wealthy men were to be found fools of various sorts, according to the taste of the lord. Some were coarse, rude, licentious fellows. Others were refined of speech, acute of observation, quick at repartee, of much learning, and of great memory. Others again were monstrous deformities, or beasts of stupendous appetite, to contemplate whom was very good mirth to melancholy lords of evil digestions and twisted minds.

Some princes chose not to be in the fashion at all, and to keep no retained fool at their Court. Charles Louis, Electoral Prince of the Rhine, was one of these. "How is it," asked a friend, "that your serene greatness does not keep a court fool?" "Well, it's easily accounted for," answered the Prince; "when I am inclined to laugh, I send for a couple of professors from college, set them at an argument, and laugh at their folly."

More than one German prince either feared or despised the "learned fool." Flögel tells us of one, near whose castle lived a reverend pastor who, because he knew a little of the Hebrew grammar, of which no one in the vicinity knew Aleph from Gimmel, thought himself a prodigy, and all the rest of the world, asses. He never preached a ser-

mon without impressing on the bumpkins the advantages of being acquainted with the Hebrew grammar; and half the lords in the country went to hear him as fool-general of the district. It happened that, on one occasion, the chief lord went to the church, to stand godfather to the schoolmaster's child; and as the noble gentleman was a bachelor, it became the duty of the pastor, according to custom, to examine him as to his religious principles. We have all heard of the too-polite English vicar, who, churching a countess, said, "Lord, save this *lady*, thy servant;" and of his equally civil clerk, who, not to be outdone in politeness, responded, "Who putteth her ladyship's trust in thee!" It was some such courtesy that was paid by the pastor to his lord. He would not, as with common peasants, try him in the Catechism, but inquired, with a sort of dignified familiarity, "Young Sir, may I ask you, what you are?"

"Certainly," said the noble godfather; "I am a fool!"

"Oh fie!" whispered the pastor; adding aloud, "I mean, what is your belief?"

"Well, my belief is that you are as great a fool as I am."

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed the pastor, who remembered his knowledge of the Hebrew grammar; "that cannot be."

"Ay, but it is so," said the noble catechumen. "The biggest fools are always the last to acknowledge the fact."

And thereat, all the grand and the common people present burst into a loud laugh; and the courteous godfather shook them again by the observation, that no fool at Court was ever half so pleasant a fool, as a fool in a cassock!

The Court, however, would seem to have had the advantage, for there, it was popularly said, were always to be found two fools,—of whom, the Prince treated one just as he pleased; and the other treated the Prince just as it pleased him.

Some writer, since Epictetus, who was among the first to call man the solitary laughing animal, has remarked that

"brutes never make themselves ridiculous; that is the peculiar prerogative of man. The former, in their strangest vagaries, act according to nature; while the latter, in trying to go beyond her, render themselves contemptible in the eyes of others, just in proportion as they excel in their own." Notwithstanding this, the practice of Wit and Jesting was once no unprofitable profession. The profession changed, and the practice was modified. Professor Miller, in his 'Historical View of the English Government,' comes to the conclusion that jesters and the ludicrous pastimes of former ages were exploded "by the higher advances of civilization and refinement," which contributed also, he thinks, "to weaken the propensity to every species of humorous exhibition." But, he adds, "though the circumstances and manners of a polished nation are *adverse* to the cultivation of humour, they are peculiarly calculated to promote the circulation and improvement of wit." The full passage may be found quoted in Sydney Smith's 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy,' in one of which he combats the Professor's assertion, by maintaining that as civilization improves the mind, true humour is better appreciated under a high than under a low degree of civilization. Idle and illiterate nobles under the latter, could enjoy the coarse jokes and tumbles of the professional jester, but idle people who are also intellectual people "must either be amused or expire with gaping." The humour that will be acceptable to these civilized yawners must be, we are told, "of a different complexion from what would pass current in more barbarous times; it must be the humour of the mind, not the humour of the body. It must be devoid of every shade of buffoonery and grimace, and managed with a great degree of delicacy and skill. Civilization improves the humour, but I can hardly allow that it diminishes it. I am strongly inclined to think there will be more humour, more agreeable raillery, and more

facetious remark displayed between seven and ten o'clock this evening, in the innumerable dinners which are to be eaten by civilized people in this vast city, than ten months could have produced in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth or Henry VII." This is very high authority, and even to express a doubt of it may seem justly to expose him who entertains the doubt, to a charge of presumption. Let the great men of the respective periods be reckoned, and it could hardly be proved that the "Table Talk" of the age of Elizabeth was not as brilliant as that of her cherished successor, Victoria. Take, for instance, the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when "Fools" had not yet disappeared from Court, and I think it will be conceded that at the Cabinet or general dinners of such Prime Ministers as Bacon, Burleigh, or Sackville, the company was likely to be as good, the wit as genial, and the humour as genuine, as at any of the banquets,—Cabinet, general, or "fish dinner" at Greenwich,—which have been presided over by the Victoria Premiers, Melbourne, Peel, or Russell, Derby, Aberdeen, or Palmerston. Then, as for the better taste of our higher civilization, it is not favourably illustrated in the national love for Christmas pantomimes, the Fool's portion of which has neither wit nor decency, but is dull, dreary, and disgusting; but which seems, nevertheless, to be as generally venerated by this highly polished nation, as the horrid Bel and the hideous Dragon were by the elegant Babylonians.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, the favour which official jesters enjoyed at Court and in noble houses, —far beyond that granted to more worthy men,—excited the disapprobation of many observant commentators. There was then no better way of amusing an aristocratic company on a dull evening, in a dreary castle, than by having the fool into the hall, and allowing him full license to attack old and young, married and single, lovers and enemies. Sir Cockscomb delighted in scandal, and he sometimes, nay very

often, told stories which made the matrons look down at the keys hanging from their girdles, the maidens hide their faces as best they could, and the noble gentlemen laugh loudly and fling commendations at the jester.

Some of this gentry, on whom their uncultivated betters depended for amusement, appear to have been a species of mountebanks, often performing tricks which are only now accomplished by parti-coloured "artists" in equestrian circles. The fool who could most wonderfully distort his body, squint most horribly, turn his face to his back, and bend himself as if he were made of nothing but one wonderful series of joints,—such a fool was accounted next in merit to his witty cousin.

And, if the fool pleased everybody,—on the other hand, it was necessary that everybody should please the fool, at least if he had business that he wished should prosper with the fool's master. Access to the latter was chiefly to be had through Sir Knave, a word from whom was often most effective in bringing about conclusions. The fool often sat near his patron at table when philosophers stood humbly in the background, and courtiers laughed servilely at the jokes, good or bad, made by "Cap-and-bells" at their expense.

At Courts where several fools were retained, the master of his company felt as much above his followers as an old Drury tragedian above a Dunstable actor. He strutted like a peacock, and thought himself an elephant, when he was only an ass. There was great diversity, however, among them. Ordinarily, a clever lord preferred a clever fool, and the dull lord, who could neither read nor write, found the same sort of retainer a necessity. Thus the fool of merit, according to his profession, was the ablest man at Court; and his superiors in rank were his inferiors in intellect. As Swift remarks, "In Comedy, the best actor plays the part of the droll, while some second rogue is made the hero or fine

gentleman. So, in this farce of life, wise men pass their time in mirth, while fools only are serious."

Greatly respected as was the privilege of the fool to speak the truth on all occasions, whoever might wince under it, the unrestrained use of such a privilege often brought the merry speaker in danger of cudgel or dagger. There is a story of a fool at a continental Court, in early days, who stirred up all the wrath that could be contained in the heart of the Lord Chamberlain, by so exact an imitation of his voice, and so sarcastic a description of his character, as to excite roars of laughter in every soul in the banqueting room, from the sovereign beneath the daïs to the scullion at the door, waiting for the dirty plates. The angry Chamberlain encountered Sir Fool an hour afterwards, when he communicated to the latter his intention, at fitting opportunity, to see if a few inches of his poniard could not stop the loquacious folly of the other for ever. The merry-andrew flew to his princely master, and sought protection for his life.

"Be of good heart, merry cock!" said the prince; "if the Chamberlain dares run his dagger into your throat, *his* throat shall be in a halter the day after. I will hang him as high as Haman."

"Ah, father!" cried the jester, "*the day after* has but promise of sorry consolation in it. He may thrust his knife between my ribs tomorrow;—and couldn't you hang him the day before?" *

Some describers of old court manners assure us that there was often more wise and profitable counsel to be found under the cap and bells of the jester, than under many a mantle which hung from the neck of venerable statesmen. Flögel, on the authority of Don Sylvio di Rosalva, says this was especially the case in Spain. It appears to have been also the case in other places, for when a Venetian ambassador, endeavouring to dissuade Louis XII. from making war

* A similar story is told of Triboulet.

against Venice, spoke of the wisdom of the Republic, Louis replied, "J'opposerai un si grand nombre de fous à vos sages, que toute leur sagesse sera incapable de les résister."

Under another method of expression, Erasmus utters a similar sentiment. He points out that the wisest men have been the worst governors of states; that the greatest orators were the most easily put out of countenance; and that the most able statesmen had fools for their sons. Tully's son, Marcus, we are told, was a fool, although he was bred at Athens; and the children of Socrates had more of their mother than of their father. Pericles was a great man, but his two sons were known by the unpleasant appellation of Βλιτομάμαι, or "Boobies." A similar name, indeed, used to be applied to the whole people of Brabant, of whom it was said, "The older they are, the greater fools they are."

As every fashion has its detractors, so the fashion of fools could not escape the censure of those who did not care to be in the mode. The Emperor Henry III., surnamed the Black, could never comprehend the use of a court fool,—a licensed scoundrel, his Majesty said, who often obtained for his nonsense rewards that had never properly been showered on the benefactors of mankind. Frederick Barbarossa had an insurmountable dislike for court fools and proud courtiers. Nevertheless he had both about him; and one of the former, on one occasion, did not hesitate to risk his own life, in order to save that of his imperial and not over-grateful master. Several other Teutonic potentates shared in this distaste for the cockscomb wearers,—perhaps, because they could not tolerate unpalatable truths; and Christian I. of Denmark once sharply remarked, on a presentation to him of several court fools, that he was not in want of such things, and if he were, he had only to give license to his courtiers, who, to his certain knowledge, were capable of exhibiting themselves as the greatest fools in Europe.

Fools were free to speak before there was a liberty of the

press, or even a press at all. But it was Frederick William I., King of Prussia, who placed his fools under censorship. They dared not speak without thinking, which, time out of mind, has been the privilege of your fool; and if their wit, offended against good manners, they ran good chance of a whipping. It was probably to hold the freedom of the sprightly corporation in check that Philander von Sittewald invented and described the Hell of Fools, which he is supposed to have visited. The locality, we are told, was like the cellar of a palace, which was crowded with Zanies, condemned to hear for ever, and to burst with envy at, each other's jokes. The retribution and the sarcasm are equally severe. The severity of the former is only inferior to that developed in another German idea, whereby, in the next world, all inefficient clergymen are condemned to read all the bad sermons ever printed in this.

We are not without instances in which the offices of preacher and fool have been exercised by the same individual. In the seventeenth century there was a preacher, named Schwab, at one of the German Courts, who was as much skilled in laying a cloth for dinner as in the construction of his sermons. These were never serious, but they were sometimes long. When the latter was the case, the not too pious Prince would interrupt the preacher in full career, and without waiting for the blessing, would roar aloud, "John, John, get ye down and lay the cloth!"—a command which met with a joke, by way of benediction, and instant obedience.

John evidently had not the fool's license of speech, or he might have improved the occasion. And this reminds me of a passage and an illustration in Osborn's Letters to his Son, which have reference to this very subject, and are well worthy of being quoted. "'Tis not dutiful," says Osborn, "nor safe, to drive your prince by a witty answer beyond all possibility of reply; it being more excusable to appear rich

than wise at the prejudice of one in superlative power, who have their ears so continually softened by flattery, as they easier bear diminutions in their treasure, which they look upon as below and without them, than in wit, handsomeness, horsemanship, etc., which their parasites have long made them believe are inherent in them. This, a carver at court, formerly in good esteem with King James (I.), found to his prejudice, who being laughed at by him for saying the *Wing of the Rabbit*, maintained it as congruous as the *Fore Leg of the Capon*, a phrase used in Scotland, and by himself here, which put the King so out of patience as he never looked on the gentleman more. The like I have been told of a bishop who, being reproved for preaching against the papists, during the treaty with Spain, replied, he could never say more than his Majesty had writ. 'Go thy way,' quoth the King, 'and expect thy new translation in Heaven, not from me,'—meaning he would never better his see. This humour makes these terrestrial gods more auspicious to fools than those Solomon saith are able to render a reason."

There are instances, too, where the remark of the wit, or the professional jester, has enlightened while it amused the monarch. We have such an instance in the case of one of the Kings of Persia who wished his people to enjoy the benefits of instruction. Schools were established, and amongst others, the court fool commenced to learn spelling. But we are told that at the very commencement of his progress, at the first junction of syllables and vowels, he opened the Koran, and pointed out to his Sovereign the passage in which Mahomet forbids the payment of impost to the kings of the earth. The fool's vigilance kept the people *in* ignorance and under taxation.

May we not reasonably conclude that there was once considerable dignity attached to the office of fool, seeing that many ancient families bore the insignia of fools in their arms? The chief of these was the family of Briesach, long

since extinct; and indeed I only know one house now existing whose crest seems to intimate some connection with the old jester, or some love of "short, brilliant folly." I allude to the House of Orford (Walpole). The crest is a male bust, on whose head is the old official fool's cap, rising from a coronet. The motto also seems to bear reference to the circumstance; for *Fari quæ sentias*, "Speak what you think," was exactly the injunction suited to the court jester.

It must, however, be observed that even the jester, licensed as he was, could not always do this without watching his opportunity, and the license at one court was different from that at another. It was just the same regarding courtiers and their homage to sovereigns. As Chesterfield reminds his son, it was respectful to bow to the King of England, but at that time it was rather a rudeness than otherwise to bow to the King of France.

And now let us contemplate the outward presence of the official fool. From the oldest period, the jester is represented bald, and wise men, monks at least, adopted the fashion. They shaved their heads, like fools, says Agrippa, in his discourse on Vanity. The fashion, however, was very ancient. The Greek Gelatopoios (laughter-maker), the Mimes, and the Moriones, are never represented otherwise but bald.

As with the natural, so with the artificial covering of the head, the fools and the monks followed, or nearly followed, one mode. The hood attached to the cloak was the covering for a fool, with an addition signified in a remark of Erasmus, that the Franciscans only wanted asses' ears and bells, to look like fools by profession. The Franciscans would seem to have intended some such profession, for they called themselves *Mundi Moriones*, or Fools of the World. And it was not an unusual thing to meet with highly religious persons who styled themselves, some, "God's Fools," others, "Christ's Fools." Thus, in 1382, Conrad von Quein-

furt, a priest, prays in his epitaph, "Christe, tuum Mimum salvum facias!" As a jester would address a sovereign to have mercy on his poor fool, so did Conrad address Christ. This fashion was adopted by Homagius, in 1609; when that pious personage called himself, "Fool in the Court of God," or "God's Court Fool."

The ass's ears further distinguished our ancient and merry friend. The *Vice* in old English plays wore a fool's cap with ears, a long jacket, and at his side a wooden sword. Learned men have looked into Greek, and found there the origin of this word *Vice*. But, as far as it signifies this dramatic fool, Flögel's derivation of it, from the old Frank word *Vis* (phiz), a face, a mask, may be accepted. *Vis-dase*, another old word for fool, is derived by Ménage from "*Vis d'âne*" (ass-face), and Vizard is a known term amongst ourselves for the mask or counterfeit representation, usually comic, of a face.

This derivation seems more satisfactory than that given by Upton, who tells us that "Old Vice was a droll character in our old plays, accoutred with a long coat, a cap, a pair of ass's ears, and a dagger of lath. This buffoon character was used *to make fun with the devil;* and he had several trite expressions, as, 'I'll be with you in a trice. Ah, hah, boy, are you there?' etc.; and this was great entertainment to the audience, to see their old enemy so belaboured in effigy. Vice seems to be an abbreviation of Vice-devil,—as Vice-roy, Vice-doge, etc., and therefore called, very properly, 'The Vice.' He makes very free with his master, like most other Vice-roys or Prime Ministers, so that he is the devil's Vice, or Prime Minister. And," adds Mr. Upton, "this it is which makes him so saucy."

In that dialogue of which Erasmus is the author, called the '*Franciscani*,' Conrad, the monk, asks Pandocheus, "Are not fools dressed otherwise than wise men?" "Well," says Pandocheus, "I do not know which dress would be most suitable for you; but you only lack long ears and

little bells, to look like the fools themselves." "Ay," replied Conrad, "we have not those adornments, and we are plainly fools as regards the things of this world; if we are what we profess to be." "I know nothing about that," rejoins Pandocheus; but I do know that there are many fools, with elongated ears and tinkling bells, who are far wiser men than they who wear the whole insignia of a doctor." He even goes so far as to assert, that there were some who outdid the University philosophers in their lectures, and who, of course, were twenty times as amusing;—the cockscomb outdoing the doctoral hat.

The cockscomb which surmounted the headpiece of the fool, is too familiar to require description. Its antiquity however is undoubted, since Lucian describes, in his 'Lapithæ,' the appearance of a jester with closely-shorn head, except at the top, where it was left in the form of the "comb" which decorates the head of the cock.

The fool carried a stick, staff, or club, which, according to Flögel, was originally nothing more than the plant (*Typha* Linnæi) which grows in marshes, and which was commonly known as the fools' club, or sceptre. It was afterwards usual to furnish the jester with one made of leather, something in the shape of Hercules' club, with a loop to hang it from the arm. It was such an emblem of his vocation as this that a fool once received from his lord, with the command never to give it up except to a greater fool than himself. Some months after, the donor fell ill, the doctor visited him frequently, and the latter being asked on one occasion of his leaving the house, what he thought of the patient, roughly answered, "He'll be off soon; he won't stop here long."

The fool heard the words, ran into the stables, and seeing no preparation for departure, shook his head as if perplexed. The next day, he heard a similar remark from the doctor,—again looked into the stables, and observing all quiet there, went up to the chamber of his sick master.

"The doctor," whispered he, "declares that you are going to leave us. How long will you be away, master mine? a year?"

"Longer, much longer, merry friend," said the lord. "So long, that coming back is out of all question."

"But I see no preparation in the stables—"

"No, nor elsewhere!" groaned the sick man.

"Then I beg to give you my club," said the jester; "for if you are setting out on a journey which you know you must make, and from which you also know you will never come back, and all this without getting anything ready for it, assuredly, master, you are a greater fool than I. But, perhaps, it is not too late for remedy."

It is said that the poor fool's words touched the rich man's heart, and that the latter, by prayer, prepared for his own journey; and by will provided for the comfort of those of his kin and household who were to tarry here, till summoned to tread the same inevitable road.

The club and the fool's whip are supposed by some to have descended from the old wooden sword of the comic actor. To these two succeeded the slender staff with the fool's head delicately carved at the top, which remained one of the signs of his office till the office itself had passed away. The broad frill was probably not adopted by the fool until the exaggeration of fashion had rendered it ridiculous. It still lingers round the necks of Scaramouch, Pierrot, and others of the family "Stultorum."

Lastly, a fool was only half a fool without his bells. To show whence this ornament was derived, Flögel has ransacked libraries, and displayed a stupendous amount of learning to remarkably little purpose;—if that purpose were, to determine why they were worn by jesters. It is going to a period more than sufficiently remote, to say, that golden bells hung from the robe of the Jewish High Priest, and not for ornament only. They told of his presence; they

rang man to thoughts of God; they rang away all the ill words that had fallen from human tongues; they represented the divine shadow; they warned men of death;—these and a hundred other significations have been found in the golden bells of the solemn High Priest.

Further, the Eastern kings, and especially the Persian, were as famous for the bells they wore as the lady in the ballad about Banbury Cross. It was but the other day that the ex-Queen of Oude was received by our own Sovereign Lady, when the head-dress or crown of the former was remarkable for its number of jingling ornaments, which sounded like bells. Christian bishops early adopted this mode, and for many centuries subsequent to this, the pictures of some of the greatest personages, male and female, royal and noble, represent them with bells of fine fashion, attached to neck-chains, bracelets, or girdle. Knights wore them on their armour, ladies on their zones; and people who were in the very highest of the mode attached them to their shoes. When this was the custom, the continual jingle at tournament or ball must have been deafening; and, what was worse, if cavalier and demoiselle bethought themselves of taking a quiet walk together beneath the oaks in the woods, every rustic near was made the confidant of the pleasant matter, as far as bells could do it. The folly of this was so patent, that we cannot wonder at fools mounting the bells in their caps.

Indeed, they mounted them not only in their caps, but on every part of the body. This was especially the case in the fifteenth century, when the fashion of wearing bells was abandoned to the professional merry-men. The mode itself, too, would seem to have prevailed in the East. As late as the seventeenth century, Tartar princes seldom stirred abroad in their barbaric splendour without a little knot of quaintly-dressed "Chaouls," or fools, running in front of the gorgeous company, at whose every step the bells attached to their shoul-

ders, knees, elbows, ankles, etc., jingled merrily. The Chaouls excited the mirth of their rather moody masters by satirical songs as they went along. In this latter custom we find a trace of the old usage of the Roman imperial soldiery who, at the ovations of Emperors, enjoyed full license of tongue, and took advantage of the triumph of their lord, to pelt him in rude songs with sly, rather than censuring, remarks alluding to his known or supposed vices. Suetonius furnishes us with more than one example of this sort.

As it was said in the olden time that there was no feast without a Levite, so, at a later period, there was no festival without a fool. That the latter custom proved a lack of civilization may perhaps be seen in the fact, that among savage nations a somewhat similar custom prevails. In its extreme form we find it among the old Kamtchatkans, whose gala days were rendered doubly joyous by the performances of the jesters by vocation. One sample however of the jokes of these gentlemen may suffice. This consists in harnessing themselves to sledges like dogs; by their close imitation of which animal in every respect, they excited roars of laughter from their not too delicate audience.

The fools who bustled about on the tournament ground of our knightly forefathers, were less gross in their merriment. They were for ever busy, before, during, and after the contest. While it was raging, they performed the part of the ancient Chorus, making sharp remarks on the proceedings, now full of pity, anon exulting; and as ready to help a favourite knight to victory, as to tender succour to his foe when fallen.

The year 1480 was, in one sense, the very jubilee year of German fools. It was then that took place the famous tournament described by Marx Walther, at which were present not less than fifteen professional fools, in splendid but grotesque uniform. Two of these were mounted, and headed the respective companies of opposing knights, play-

ing lustily the while on screeching bagpipes. It was their delight to raise the wildest screaming from these instruments, as the adversaries rushed to the combat. They might not hope to frighten the knights, but they often succeeded in frightening the horses; at which, loudly laughed the gentle company. Of the remainder of the grotesque children of folly, eleven were engaged in racing, leaping, tumbling, and wildly joking. The remaining two galloped about the arena, sometimes with young fools, sometimes young nobles, on their backs. These fought their mock tournaments; and as the fools went prancing to the charge and rolled over one another in the dust, amid volleys of jokes of every possible description, the spectators condescended to be amused therewith till sterner fighters took the scene, and the breath which had been wasted in laughter, was now held in suspense.

While the combat was proceeding, the most restless of the fools would perhaps try to seek repose with his head reclining on a tin pot, into which, as he remarked, he had stuffed a whole sack-full of feathers to render his pillow softer. When a knight was slain, the fool had at his service a brief epitaph: "Here you are, gentle Sir, quiet for once in your lifetime!" These jokes of the old arena descended to the clowns of the circus; and manuals of wit continue to make mention of their sallies.

The descent was natural enough. As noble lords and ladies patronized fools who figured in the lists, so common people welcomed them at their village festivals. Some districts kept their own fools. There were others who raised to that distinction any "poor natural" of the locality, out of whose peculiarities or infirmities it was possible to extract something to laugh at. In some places, fools were hired on great occasions, to amuse a company unable to amuse itself. In the sixteenth century this appears to have been the case at notable Greek weddings in the Levant.

Schweigger describes the nuptial feast (at which he was present) in 1578, of a patriarchal protonotary with a certain Irene Moschini, at which all the jollity was produced by a Jewish fool and other hirelings of the like amusing vocation.

The Jews themselves employed jesters to enliven their own wedding feasts. This was the case in Silesia as late as the last century. The company sat gravely enough till the indispensable jokers and tumblers were introduced, and *then* the fun was of the oddest, if not most refined, sort. But the Silesian Jews were a simple people, unacquainted with the mendacity and dreariness of wedding-breakfast speeches. Their fools had full license to abuse truth, but not to be dreary.

In passing now to the fools of different courts and localities, I will, by the way, notice a class which may claim precedence, by right of sex. I therefore proceed to say a few words of the FEMALE FOOLS.

THE FEMALE FOOLS.

I DO not know any earlier instance of a retained female fool than in the case of the wife of Seneca, who kept in her house one named Harpaste, and whom the philosopher describes as *fatua*, adding that he himself found no pleasure in such objects; and (as I have quoted in another page) that if he found it necessary to take delight in contemplating a fool, he had not far to go,—having only to look in a mirror. Harpaste may have been retained out of charity, for she was so witless that, becoming suddenly blind, she was not conscious of her calamity; but, remarking how very dark it was in the house, asked the pædagogus to lead her out-of-doors.

Seneca, it will be remembered, loved folly as little in a philosopher as in the fool by vocation. "He," observes the son of the Cordovaner, "who duly considers the business of life and death, will find that he has little time to spare from that study. And yet, how we trifle away our hours upon niceties and cavils! Will Plato's imaginary ideas make me an honest man? . . . *A mouse is a syllable, but a syllable does not eat cheese; therefore a mouse does not eat cheese?* Oh, these childish follies! . . . We are jesting, when we should help the miserable,—ourselves, as well as others."

Jeanne, Queen of Charles I. of France, maintained a female fool of the name of Artaude du Puy, but of whom we know nothing more than that she cost her mistress, or rather the royal treasury, a considerable sum, for dress. There is an unpublished autograph letter of Charles, dated January 3, 1373, an extract from which, printed by the

author of '*Les Monnaies des Évêques*,' etc., shows that the King orders his treasurers to pay Jean Mandoli, furrier and citizen of Paris, the sum of 179 gold francs, for certain gauds and braveries of woman's dress, furnished "to Artaude du Puy, Fole to our dear companion, the Queen."

In 1429, we hear of a *moult gracieuse folle* (she is so called by St. Remy), whose name was Madame d'Or, and whose wit kept all the nobles laughing at the festival in honour of the institution of the Golden Fleece, at Bruges, in 1429. A *folle* was also attached to the household of Margaret, the granddaughter of Charles the Bold. Her position in the household is clearly ascertained by the fact that, when moving abroad, she followed her mistress in a chariot, accompanied by the "*old* ladies in waiting."

In the succeeding century, in the year 1561, we find a woman, named La Jardinière, registered as "Fole de la Royne," attached to the rather gloomy household of the Queen Dowager, Catherine de Medicis. Catherine seems to have patronized this sort of official, for in 1568, and for at least four subsequent years, there was a certain *Jacquette*, who held in the Queen's establishment the office of "Plaisante de la Royne."

As far, however, as witty license of speech went, Catherine's court ladies not unfrequently excelled the court fools, male or female. They did not, indeed, let their lightly-hung tongues ring out at Majesty itself; but they observed no such restraint with anybody beneath the rank, even though the individual might be above the King himself in power. I may instance, as a case in point, the mighty Cardinal of Lorraine, who, despite all his puissance, was often the butt of the lively ladies of the Court of Catherine de Medicis and her royal sons. Brantôme says of this gay and intellectual priest, that, when things went well with him, his arrogance was insufferable; but that no one could be more courteous, or more humble, when his projects met with ob-

struction. One of the Queen's maids-of-honour, Mdlle. de la Guyonnière, afterwards Madame de Ligneroles, often carried on a fool's war with the redoubted Cardinal. Whenever the latter appeared to be meek and polite with this lady,—she, who, according to Brantôme's pleasant compendium, "étoist très habile fille, belle, honneste, et qui disoit bien le mot," would, with audacious gaiety, exclaim, "Come, come, meek Sir, tell us now if you have not met with some check during the night past? Confess at once that you have been humbled, or we will have nothing to say to you; for, most assuredly, you have encountered some defeat. So, let us hear all about it, if you would have us gracious with you."

At a later period, we find another lady whose wit was wont to give mirth to courtly circles, if not to the French Court itself. I allude to the sister of that younger De Thou who was executed, by Richelieu, in 1642, for not revealing the conspiracy headed by Cinq-Mars, who had trusted the secret of it with his friend. In after-years, this lady attended the funeral service of the Cardinal, or a service held for the repose of his soul. And there she set the noble persons present into scarcely suppressed laughter, by exclaiming, as she gazed at the coffin where Richelieu lay, or was supposed to lie,—in the words of Martha to Christ, after the death of Lazarus,—"Domine, si fuisses hîc, frater meus non esset mortuus." ("Lord, if thou hadst been *here*, my brother had not died.") It was very apt, though a little profane.

To return to the official female fool, we must go back to the Court of the father of the King, under whom this lady lived, namely, the Court of Henri IV. There was there a Mathurine, who seems to have held the office of *Plaisante*, not to the Queen exclusively, but for the benefit and amusement of the Court generally. Of what quality was the wit of these *plaisantes*, some of whom I think were dwarfs, I am unable to say; the only certain fact I can tell of them is,

that they, though not more than the male fools, continued to wear out the soles of their shoes with great rapidity. The registers of accounts show an extraordinary consumption of shoe leather. In the '*Collection de la Chambre des Comptes*,' under the year 1319, thirty-two pairs of shoes are set down as having been supplied *at one time* to the Queen's dwarf!

It is said of Mathurine that she employed her wit in laughing people out of the Huguenot faith into Catholicism. Mathurine was present in 1594 when Jean Chastel wounded Henri, in his attempt on that king's life, and she ran great risk of sharing the fate of the would-be assassin, for the monarch, aware of her frantic zeal for the Roman Catholic Church, and that she only looked on Henri as half a Romanist, or believing that she was playing too serious a joke by right of her office, ordered her under arrest as an accomplice. Mathurine, however, proved her innocence, and was set free. She died previous to the year 1627.

De Tillot quotes two authors who make mention of this female fool, Mathurine. The first is the anonymous author of 'La Lunatique,' who, addressing the King's male jester, "Maître Guillaume," remarks: "Thou doest well to have small love for the Reformers. Satan himself looks on them only with regret; and for a good reason, seeing that if the Reformers could have their way, there would soon be an end of court fools and buffoons. Ah, poor Mathurine, and you poor fellows, Angoulevent, Maître Guillaume, and indeed all you other fools, as well without hoods as with, where would all your pensions be if the Reformers had the upper hand?"

It is a significant fact, this, of the Reformers being the opponents of the expensive follies, and their professors, patronized at Court. Ogive, the second author cited by De Tillot, speaks also of Mathurine, as a salaried fool, appointed by the King: "Folle à gages, et appointée du Roi." He

writes, in 1627, saying, "Truly it is a marvellous thing that noble personages, who have been brought up all their lives with the parrots and apes of the Louvre, and who do not less belong to the Court than Mathurine did, or the Queen-Mother's dwarfs *do*, should not have learnt in their cabinets to write reasonably."

Thirty-four years after this was written, a Spanish *folle* appeared at the French Court, and in rather suspicious society; that of Don John of Austria, who accompanied the famous Pimentel to Paris, to negotiate the marriage of Maria Theresa of Spain with the young Louis XIV. (a marriage which, as it was to put an end to the war, was more cared for by Mazarin than a union which might have taken place between the Cardinal's most clever niece, Marie Mancini, and the French king). Don John had the impudence to present at court this woman, whom he called his "Folle." She was full of fun and wit, and every one sought to excite both. Louis enjoyed her jokes with wonderful zest. Her name was Capiton, and no party was thought complete without the presence of the Don's *Folle*. The cudgelling of brains between her and Marie Mancini was a gladiatorial fight. Poor Marie had loved Louis, and Louis was warmly attached to a woman who had awakened in him the only good qualities he ever possessed, and who saved him from being such a mere beast as his successor was. Capiton loved to provoke Marie, by singing the praises of the Spanish Infanta, and Marie, sharp-witted, as well as sharply wounded by these praises of a rival who was to triumph over her, replied by sarcasms that were repeated with intense delight throughout France. The haughty, eccentric, coarse, and sensual Don John was proud of his Folle Capiton.

The official female fool survived as late as the year 1722, when we meet with a certain Kathrin Lise. She was the duly-appointed jokeress, if I may so speak, to the Duchess von Sachsen-Weissenfels-Dahme, who resided in the castle

of Drehna, and depended upon Kathrin for her mirth. This is all we know of the last of the line of female jesters.

Before proceeding to sketch an historical outline of our own English fools, I propose to treat briefly of the Eastern buffoons. These may fairly claim precedence, on the ground that in the East the fashion of maintaining household fools is supposed to have originated, and that it has not yet expired in that locality. Further, there is, in connection with barbaric Courts, both in the East and the West, some legendary matter connected with the Fool, of which it may be as well finally to dispose, prior to dealing with the English jester as an historical character.

THE ORIENTAL "NOODLE."

As I have just stated, the court or household fool probably originated in the East. The close of this Chapter will show that in the East that pleasant or pretentious official still survives. In a region where aberration of mind is taken to be a sort of divine inspiration, we need not wonder at finding the professional jester still attached to certain families, and himself and his vocation treated with a certain degree of respect.

I have already spoken of the buffoons who could not move the gravity of their own solemn master Attila; and we know that Timour rather kept these people for the amusement of his guests, than that he experienced any satisfaction himself in the exercise of their craft. They were not wanting in the Courts of the Caliphs, and the name of Bahalul conspicuously figures among the cap-and-bell favourites of Haroon Al-Raschid. It was to him that the Caliph once said, "Fool, give me a list of all the blockheads in Bagdad." To which Bahalul answered, "That were not so easy, and would take too long; but if you want a list of the wise men, you shall have it in two minutes."

It was in jest that Haroon presented him a document, by which he was constituted governor of all the bears, wolves, foxes, apes, and asses, in the Caliphate. "It is too much for me," said the fool; "I am not ambitious enough to desire to rule all your holiness's subjects."

Bahalul one day, finding no one in the throne-room of the sovereign father of the faithful, seated himself on the cushions of the priest-monarch. The guards near were

horror-stricken at beholding the jester on the sacred couch of authority, imitating the manners of Haroon himself; just as Chicot, long after, used to mimic those of Henri III. They speedily dragged him from the throne of cushions, and began bastinadoing him with such violence that the Caliph, hearing his cries, entered the hall and demanded the reason of the outcry. "Uncle," said Bahalul, "I am not screaming on my own account, but on yours. I pity you. I have only tried royalty for five minutes, and I am already in a fever with pain inflicted by these fellows. What must you endure, then, who occupy the same distinguished seat every day!"

Bahalul seems to have been a dissipated fellow, and the Caliph enjoined him to marry and live discreetly, loving his wife, and bringing up his family in honour. The jester so far obeyed as to go through the nuptial ceremony; but as he was conducting his wife to her apartment, the uncourteous bridegroom suddenly paused, looked as if he were petrified, and declaring that he had never heard such a tumult in his life, took to his heels, and did not re-appear for months. Meanwhile, the deserted bride had procured a divorce, and *then* Bahalul made his *rentrée* at Court.

"So!" exclaimed the Caliph, with an inquiring air.

"Ay, ay!" cried the fool, "you would have done as I did. The tumult scared me away beyond the hills."

"What tumult?" asked Haroon.

"Why," said Bahalul, "as my wife was entering her room, there came from her, sounds as of a thousand voices. Amid them, I could distinguish the cries of 'rent! taxes! doctors! sons! daughters! schooling! dress! silks! satins! muslins! drawers! slippers! money! more money! debt! imprisonment! and Bahalul has drowned himself in the Caliph's bath!—therewith," added the jester, "terrified at the solemn warning, and wishing to avoid the profanity of plunging my person into your brightness's bath, I fled, till the danger

was over, and—here I am; owing nothing, and disinclined to drown myself."

Bahalul, however, was not the most favourite jester of this Caliph. There is no doubt that the most renowned of these was Ebn Oaz. We have indeed but one sample of his quality, but that is excellent. Unfortunately, it is also well known; but it must not be omitted in this record of the fraternity. Haroon, it is said, desired to exhibit the best qualities of the wit in presence of the young Sultana and her brilliant court; and he suddenly ordered Ebn Oaz to make some excuse which should be more offensive than the crime it was to extenuate. After considerable thought, Oaz slunk away, and the disappointed spectators were speaking of him as "incapable," when the Caliph, suddenly starting up from his seat, with a roar and a look of exquisite anguish, set the whole court in confusion. The fact was, that Ebn Oaz had gone behind the curtains of the throne, and, opening them gently, had given the Caliph so astounding a pinch in the rear, that he sprang up as if a javelin had pierced him. Looking on the offender with rage and anguish, he ordered him to be slain for the treasonable and intolerable assault. "Stay!" said Oaz to the too-ready officials, who were already fingering their bow-strings. "Hear my excuse," added he, turning to the Caliph: "I declare, by way of apology, that when I pinched your Holiness behind, I thought I was pinching the Sultana, your wife." Haroon saw at once that the excuse was worse than the crime, and that he ought to be delighted; but he only laughed in a forced way, remarking to the Sultana, before he resumed his seat, that he felt he should not forget the joke for some time to come.

This story has been made wonderful use of, and has been dished up in a hundred different ways in a hundred different localities. It belongs, however, originally to the East, as do so many other of our most ancient and accepted anecdotes. I believe that all the facetiæ of Hierocles were old

Indian, before they were new Greek stories, and that the "simpleton" who clung to the anchor when the ship was sinking,—who stood before a mirror with his eyes closed, to see how he looked when asleep,—who carried about with him a brick of his house, as a specimen of the building,—who made the experiment of keeping a horse alive without food, only failing to succeed by the premature death of the steed;—all these, and some dozens of others like them, had all drawn laughter from Eastern potentates before they began to raise a smile in the fairer faces of the Hellenes. But these stories only amused; and the jester had the prerogative of being free, as well as the duty of being entertaining.

This freedom of the jester, and the good use to which he could apply his joke and his license, is exemplified in the case of the town-fool who entered the hall where Mahmoud Ghizni was seated in full assembly. Without appearing to be conscious of the illustrious presence and the august company, he went prying about into the corners of the hall, as if in search of some particular object. At length, said he, "Not one!"

"Not one what?" roared the Ghiznian.

"Sheep's tail!" said the fool, in a tone of voice which set every one in a roar of laughter.

"It's no laughing matter," added he; "I am starving, and all I ask is a sheep's tail for my dinner."

"Nay!" cried Mahmoud, "thou shalt have one;" and whispering to an official who stood near, the latter personage presently brought in a raw vegetable, which in its shape somewhat closely resembled the long, heavy, and unctuous tail of the Eastern sheep. The fool took it without observation; and, after thanks to the Prophet for excellent mutton, he began devouring it. Observing that the monarch smiled, the jester asked him, with the tail in his mouth, if what he was doing reminded his Majesty of anything.

"Of what should a sheep's tail in thy mouth remind

me," said Mahmoud, "except of the proverb that 'Extremes meet'?" The fool was overwhelmed for awhile by the laughter duly shouted forth by the subordinates at their great master's joke, but he soon recovered himself, and when Mahmoud asked him what he thought of his joint, he answered, "That the thing was eatable enough, but that he observed that sheep's tails were by no means so fat and well-flavoured as they had been in the days of his Majesty's predecessor; but that, as men were more lean, too, now, than they used to be, perhaps the fact alluded to was of no material consequence."

"Thou art not such a fool as thou pretendest to be," said the sovereign. "It was but yesterday that one of thy profession told me of the gratitude the owls felt for me, because of the many ruined villages in the land; and now thou hintest at the misery of the people. Go thy way, good fellow, and go thy way with full stomach, and assurance that both evils shall yet be remedied."

In the sixteenth century, when Baber was Emperor of Hindostan, the merry profession was in favour, but the furnishers of amusement for the monarch comprised others besides jesters. Thus, at state dinners, as soon as the imperial host and his guests took their places, tumblers, rope-dancers, and jugglers, whom no other country could equal, exhibited their feats. The highest point of fun was when the scattering of coin among the performers, excited a huge uproar. In earlier times, the wordy contests of two fools used to beguile the half-hour before dinner; but in Baber's days, he and similar potentates were wont to be exceedingly well amused by witnessing a couple of rams butting at each other. It was perhaps as rational for royalty so to do, as to listen to Ethiopian serenaders chanting harmonized nonsense.

Some writers have classed the "Mutes" among the professional fools of the Eastern courts. This would seem to

be an error not easily accounted for. The duty of that official was of a rather severe cast. The fool, however, was well known among the Turks, and perhaps the most celebrated was that Nasur ed Deen Chodscha, who was in the service of the first Bajazet, and who joked to such excellent effect that he once tickled Timour Leng into such good humour that the latter paid the fool the high compliment of saving from plunder his native town Jengi-Scheher (Neapolis). It was done after this wise:—

The inhabitants of the city, hearing of the approach of the conqueror, prepared to defend themselves with vigour. Nasur counselled them to do nothing of the sort, but to trust to him alone, and his mediation with Timour. The people were doubtful of his success, but they yielded. Before proceeding to the camp of the besieger, Nasur, who knew it was useless to approach the great chief without a present, considered what gift was likely to be most acceptable. He resolved it should be fruit, but he hesitated between figs and quinces. "I will consult with my wife," said Nasur ed Deen, and he according did so. The lady advised him to take quinces, as the larger fruit. "Very good," said Nasur, "that being your opinion, I will take figs." When he reached the foot of the throne of Tamerlane, he announced himself as the ambassador from the beleaguered citizens, and presented, as an offering of their homage, his trumpery basket of figs. The chief burst into a rage, and ordered them to be flung at the head of the representative of the people of Jengi-Scheher. The courtiers pelted him with right good will; and each time he was struck, Nasur, who stood patient and immovable, gently exclaimed, "Now Allah be praised!" or, "Oh, the Prophet be thanked!" or, "Oh, admirable! how can I be sufficiently grateful?"

"What dost thou mean, fellow?" asked Timour; "we pelt you with figs, and you seem to enjoy it!"

"Ay, truly, great Sir," replied Nasur; "I gratefully enjoy the consequence of my own wit. My wife counselled me to bring quinces, but I chose to bring figs; and well that I did, for with figs you have only bruised me, but had I brought quinces, you would have beaten my brains out."

The stern conqueror laughed aloud, and declared that, for the sake of one fool, he would spare all the asses in the city, male and female, them and their property.

"Then," cried Nasur, "the entire population is safe!" and he ran homewards to communicate the joyful intelligence.

Nasur, indeed, ranks among the most useful, as well as the most witty, of his ancient vocation. On one occasion, Bajazet had condemned many scores of his officers to death, for some trifling offence, in time of war. "Ay, indeed," exclaimed the fool, "hang the knaves! hang them! what use are they? kill them for small offences, and rogues will fear to commit greater! excellent wisdom! Timour is at hand; away with them before he comes! The army can do without leaders. You take the standard; I will beat the drum; and we will thus meet that troublesome individual at the head of the forces. We will see how we can handle the Tartars, without such knaves as these to help us!" Bajazet comprehended the implied reproof, and spared the well-proved and lightly-offending leaders of his host.

On another occasion, Nasur, having succeeded so well with his figs, acknowledged the clemency of Timour, by presenting him with a few fresh gherkins, for the great warrior's supper. The chief ordered him a reward of ten gold crowns, and Nasur went home rejoiced. When the season came that other gherkins had grown into cucumbers, Nasur, expecting commensurate recompense, carried to the residence of Timour a basket full of the refreshing vegetable. The door-keeper, however, refused to allow him to pass until he had agreed to give him half the reward that might

be paid to Nasur by order of the chief. It happened that the latter was "not i' the vein," and instead of commanding a recompense of gold crowns, he sentenced the unfortunate gift-bearer to receive a hundred blows from the stick. Nasur took fifty patiently; but *then* he cried to the unpleasant official to hold his hand; and he explained how the other half of the acknowledgment belonged to the door-keeper. Timour swore that the stipulation should be observed, and the remaining half-hundred blows were paid where they were justly due.

A whole Encyclopædia might be written of the sayings and doings of the Eastern "simpletons," alone. My space is too limited to allow of my doing much more than to offer a few illustrations; but, to those who have much curiosity in the matter, and who may not be disinclined to spend whole hours with a single class of the Oriental Fools, I recommend the well-known book, which contains the birth, parentage, and education, life, character, and behaviour, lively sayings, last dying speech and confession of the Gooroo Noodle. From that tempting chronicle, I return to the "Toorke" jester, with the remark that, great as was his freedom of speech, it was not every witty fellow at Court who was so licensed. The courtier who ventured to take a liberty with a Turkish potentate was as uncertain, as to the effect, as the Roman wits were when bold enough to joke with the Emperor. Selim, the son of Bajazet, was one with whom the most favoured of his followers could not with impunity venture on freedom of speech. When engaged on his Egyptian expedition, one of his officials the most closely attached to his person, hazarded the question as to when his Majesty expected to be at Cairo. "*We* shall be there," said Selim, "when it may please God. As for thy arrival there, it rather pleases me that thou shalt stay here." And therewith, on a sign from the Sultan, the unlucky querist was instantly put to death.

Murad the Third, though as savage by nature as Selim, could take a joke better than his predecessor could a simple question. There was one thing, however, which he could *not* tolerate—tobacco; the use of which he punished with death. But among the few members of his court was a man renowned for his wit, and for his power of raising the spirits of the Sultan, even when these had been depressed by a three days' fit of drunkenness. Now this court-wit loved smoking, and was resolved, not only to have his pipe, but to escape the penalty of death attached to the enjoyment of it. Accordingly, he caused a deep pit to be dug in his tent, and when he desired to give himself up to his dearest indulgence, he would descend into it, sitting there concealed by a sieve-like construction drawn over the top, and lightly covered with turf. One evening, Murad became sagacious of the hookah from afar, and, tracing the offender to the very pit in which he was quietly smoking, threatened him with instant death. The offender, however, coolly thrusting his head upward, as he provokingly drew another mouthful of reeking luxury, exclaimed, "Go to, thou son of a bondwoman! Thy edicts extend *over* the earth, certainly; but they do not extend under it." "Take thy life for thy joke," said Murad, laughing and coughing,—the first at the jest, and the second at the odour and vapour, which he detested, —"I only wish thy pipe were as enjoyable as thy wit."

Many samples of this sort I could continue to place before my readers; but, having regard to the patience of those who have so often borne patiently with me, I will only trace the Eastern jester down to modern times. Till after the commencement of the present century, the courts of the Hospodars of Moldavia and Wallachia were never without the mirthful official. The latter was usually an Armenian. Indeed, there were, ordinarily, several at each court. Their duty was to amuse their lord when he was at table, by every means in their power, by strange remarks, by droll stories,

or by burlesques more or less extravagant. In processions, they walked before their masters, and carried long staves covered with silver bells. Since they fell into disuse, the Gipsies succeeded to the exercise of one part of their office, and these are admitted to the palaces of the great, on particular festivals, to amuse their illustrious hearers with national and comic songs.

From a very early period, the public and private buffoons of the East seem to have been selected from among the Armenians. Joinville introduces to us some very sprightly professionals of this sort, in his 'History of St. Louis.' "There came with the Prince," he says, "three minstrels from Armenia (trois ménestriers de la Grande Hyrménie). They carried three horns, and when they began to perform on them, you might have taken the sound for that of swans. They produced the softest melody. . ." He then informs us how, having fulfilled their office of minstrels, they performed that of buffoons, for the amusement of the illustrious personages present. "They made three marvellous leaps (*sauts*); . . . . a cloth (*touaille*) being placed beneath their feet, they threw a somersault upon it, without any spring, and two of them leaped in this way, head backwards."

The old fashion in the East did not altogether expire till a very recent period, for we find a jester at the court of the father of the present Sultan of Turkey. It was said of some eminent individual, that he had made two centuries illustrious; and something like it may be said of this oriental jester, who flourished at the court of Constantinople at the close of the last, and above a quarter of the present century. In 1836 died Abdi Bey, who, for nearly half a century previous, had been the favourite jester of successive Sultans. He worked hard and reaped a large fortune. In the early part of his career, his masters treated him as a mere brutish buffoon, on whom they might play any trick. Sometimes they set him off in a gallop, mounted on a giraffe, or tumbled him

headlong into a pond, to the danger of his life. The late Sultan Mahmoud had no stomach for such sorry jokes, and Abdi Bey devoted his capacity to keep his patron in good spirits by amusing him with smart sayings and pleasant stories. He must have been an incomparable fool in his time, or his masters must have been greater fools than he, for out of their imperial bounty, he contrived to save £150,000, which he left to his grateful and deeply-resigned heirs. It was nearly as much as the late Mr. Greenough made by the manufacture of lozenges—"ten a penny!"

Abdi Bey has been called the last of the household buffoons. But this is not the case; for though the official fool has disappeared from Court, he is still to be found attached to families, or heads of families. We even meet with this rather impudent than merry fellow in the household of Christian Patriarchs. Only a few years ago, when the Nestorian Patriarch was flying, with a large number of his followers, from their would-be murderers in the mountains, they found refuge at Mosul, in the houses of the English consul and the Rev. Mr. Fletcher. The latter gentleman, in his 'Notes from Nineveh,' so describes his reverence's buffoon as to induce us to believe that to have much to do with him was really "no joke at all." "My new guests," he says, "were very orderly in their manners, though wild in their appearance. Only one decided quarrel broke out among them during their abode with me; and this was occasioned by a half-crazy old man who served the Patriarch in the double capacity of a domestic and buffoon. This worthy was addicted, like many of his countrymen, to the vice of intoxication; and having on one occasion partaken rather freely of the juice of the grape, he grew riotous, and addressed a reproachful epithet to one of his companions. The fiery nature of the mountaineer was excited, and he retorted in no complimentary terms. The old buffoon drew his dagger, and made a rush at his antagonist, who retreated

into an inner apartment and shut the door. Nothing could equal the rage of old Yohanan at being thus baulked of his vengeance. Two or three times he burst from those who were restraining him, and drove his knife into the hard wood of the door. At length he was quieted, and after sleeping-off his drunkenness, appeared the next morning with a sober and abashed countenance." I suppose old Yohanan was past being amusing, for we are subsequently told, that to raise the drooping spirits of the Patriarch, an itinerant Italian juggler was hired. At *his* tricks and witticisms the pious head of the Nestorian Church forgot the slaughter of his friends and the devastation of their and his homesteads. The saintly and sympathetic man laughed till he could hardly sit upright on his cushions, and only ceased then because some wonderful stroke of the juggler's art induced him suddenly to suspect that such marvellous proficiency was only an inspiration of the devil.

By way of supplement to this Chapter, I will add a few short illustrations of the jester at other barbarous courts than those of the East;—and first, of "that beyond the Atlantic."

When Cortez first visited the court of Montezuma, he found there various instances of high civilization:—among others, light ladies, strong drinks, court fools, and a spirit of infidelity against the established church, inspired by an influence called the "Rational Owl." The Aztec monarch resembled Heliogabalus in one respect;—"he had a museum," says Brantz Mayer, in his excellent work, 'Mexico, Aztec, Spanish, and Republican,' "in which, with an oddity of taste unparalleled in history, there had been collected a vast number of human monsters, cripples, dwarfs, albinos, and other freaks and caprices of nature." Bernal Diaz saw the monarch at dinner, and among the incidents recorded

by the old Spaniard, is, that, "at different intervals during the time of dinner, there entered certain Indians, hump-backed, very deformed and ugly, who played tricks of buffoonery; and others, who they said were jesters." The fashion of maintaining the latter was followed by the nobles. "The principal men," says Acoste, quoted by Prescott, "had also buffoons and jugglers in their service, who amused them, and astonished the Spaniards by their feats of dexterity and strength."

Montezuma patronized rather the witty buffoons than the skilful jugglers. "Indeed, he used to say, that more instruction was to be gathered from them than from wiser men, for they dared to tell the truth." Prescott adds in a note, founded on Clavigero, that "the Aztec mountebanks had such repute, that Cortez sent two of them to Rome, to amuse his Holiness, Clement VII." This was only an exchange of personages of similar profession, for the European official house-fool had already been imported into America. In 1519, at St. Jago, when Velasquez the governor was beginning to be suspicious of the designs of Cortez to supplant him, the two great men were walking together towards the port. As they passed on, the fool of the former called aloud, "Have a care, Master Velasquez, or we shall have to go a-hunting, some day or other, after this same captain of ours." "Do you hear what the rogue says?" exclaimed the Governor to his companion. "Do not heed him," said Cortez, "he is a saucy knave, and deserves a good whipping." The hint of the fool, however, heightened the suspicions of his master; but how the latter was too slow of wit and action to profit thereby, is known to all who have read the graphic pages which tell of the conquest of Mexico.

But neither Aztec nor Spanish monarch rivalled their less civilized brother of Monomotapa in this peculiar department of his household. Gallienus alone deserves to be mentioned, in this respect, with the African potentate, who never stirred

abroad with less than five hundred official fools in his vast and noisy retinue!

There were, as late as the last century, and there probably still linger on the Gold Coast, traditions of the mythological jester of Africa, Nanni, son of the Spider. His busy parent had spun all the human race from the thread of his bowels, and found no gratitude from the living produce of his labours. The Fetis seduced all creation to sin, and the Spider bethought him how to annoy the Fetis. With what little material he had left, he spun the last man, and educated him at his own paternal feet, on the edge of the domestic web. The tricks the father taught his boy were long the delight of polished and perspiring African tribes. Nanni was the ebony Owlglas of the land of Ham. He served the Fetis, but only as Jocrisse did his master, to his great vexation. Was Nanni commissioned to provide a chicken for dinner, he knew how, after devouring the bird himself, to replace bones and skin, and place it before his employer, the very model of a plump pullet. Was an egg ordered for breakfast, Nanni first sucked out the contents through a minute orifice, and filled up the shell with the finest sand. Nanni, too, was a married man, with numberless children, and more wives than "that Sardanapalus of Snobs," Brigham Young. In a time of scarcity, when even a bean was worth more than its weight in gold, the hungry wives and offspring of Nanni drove him forth by their importunity, to seek food. He came upon a company of boys and girls who had been left by their father in charge of a quantity of beans, to dry and turn them in the air. Nanni leaped in among them, made them shriek with laughter at his jokes, and stamp with delight at his dancing. The latter exercise he concluded by rolling his well-oiled body among the beans, with which, sticking to him as he rose, he made off, after bidding the children look at his hands, to see that he carried nothing away with him. By repeating

this feat, he nourished his household for days; and the alarmed owner of the precious vegetables could not account for their diminution from any account rendered by the young guardians. But detecting Nanni in the fact, the owner chopped off both his hands, as he lay rolling his greased body among the beans. The wit of the national jester had been grievously at fault, and his household becoming more hungry and angry than ever, his wives broke into open revolt, and eloped in a body, in search of another mate. But Nanni was beforehand with them in every respect; for taking the guise of a woodman, and having recovered his lost members, he met them in their flight, without being recognized by them. They told him of the fate of their husband, and of their intentions, concluding with a gentle hint that they were well enough inclined to accept a well-built young wood-cutter for their common husband. "No! no!" cried Nanni, "times are so very hard, that I have been obliged to dismiss forty-nine of my wives, and to live as well as I can with one!" This speech alarmed the ladies, who forthwith hurried homeward; but the active Nanni encountered them at the threshold, over which he would not allow them to pass till they had entered into stipulations whereby he was secured in full and despotic authority over his entire family.

The jokes of Nanni, son of the Spider, for a long time formed all the history, literature, and amusement of Negro circles. A thousand times over have his tricks been told and acted, in a semi-dramatic way, to delighted groups of swarthy listeners beneath the African moon. I may notice that the story-teller has always been a greater favourite in Africa than the mere jester. I remember, indeed, having read of one potentate, the Kaffir chief Tshaka, or Chaka, who would tolerate neither, at his horridly solemn court. On one occasion, however, and in full council, a merry fellow gave utterance to a frolicsome thought which he could not repress. It succeeded admirably,—gloomy king and grave

counsellors were thrown into the most convulsive hilarity. When they had all recovered, the chief, pointing towards the jester, showed his grateful sense of a rare delight, by exclaiming, "Take that dog out, and kill him; he has *made me laugh!*"

To make his patron laugh was the especial and variously-rewarded vocation of the jester whom I now proceed to introduce to my readers. The English Court Fool was a very peculiar fellow, and in the history of some members of the order of Motley, in this country, there are incidents unparalleled in the history of the official jesters of any other nation. Let us see whence they came, as well as who they were.

ENGLISH MINSTREL AND JESTER.

All writers who have taken the ancient English minstrels for a subject, agree in stating that the old Saxon invaders of our land brought with them bards, and a profound reverence for the bards themselves and the art they professed. These highly-esteemed personages were rhyming historians, chroniclers, theologians, and philosophers. They held the key, or, what was the same thing to them, men believed that they held the key, of many secrets appertaining, not only to earth, but heaven. They were mighty personages in their day; but they could not withstand a ray from the Star of Bethlehem. When the Saxons became Christians, or at least professed Christianity, the vocation of the old, mysterious, rapt, inspired bard, with his eternal memory of the past, and his prophetic view into a long future, was entirely gone. He had been a sort of god, and he became a mortal who sang for hire. The Jupiter of yesterday was now, in most cases, and in most men's eyes, only a Jupiter Scapin.

In *most* cases, but not in all; for, such as were scholars among the bards devoted themselves to the cultivation of poetry. There were others, like the early German jester who remarked that he did not know the Lord's Prayer, but only the tune of it. They had more music in their souls,—such as the music was, and such as their souls were,—than religion. These turned minstrels, and sang and played for a reward.

With the superior class above noticed, I have nothing further to do; but have to keep companionship with the hired minstrel,—or the itinerating minstrel, who exercised his

vocation for bread. The latter was not altogether wanting to the Anglo-Saxon, previous to the period of their conversion. The native gleeman who then exercised his welcome office, is described by Dr. Lingard, in his 'History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church,' as being a minstrel who was "either attached to the service of a particular chieftain, or wandering from place to place, and subsisting on the bounty of his hearers." Mr. Eccleston, in his 'Introduction to English Antiquities,' describes the gleeman as all-important to the in-door life of the Anglo-Saxons, before whom he "sang, played, danced, and performed sleight-of-hand tricks for the pleasure of the company." This would hardly seem to show that the gleeman was, as some have asserted, of a higher grade than the common minstrel of later years. It is certain that he was the popular minstrel of his day; his songs were sung in castle and farmyard; and when the great St. Adhelm was sensible of a call to preaching, and was desirous of getting together a congregation, he knew no better method than to assume the character of the gleeman. Thus accoutred, harp in hand, he would station himself at some cross-road, or at the corner of a bridge, and rattle forth a series of popular songs on passing and popular subjects. He soon drew an audience around him; and when he had fairly got them into a train of attention, he would gradually slip away from his comic songs and lively airs on the harp, and fulfil his office of Christian missionary, with as much success as he had played that of the vivacious gleeman.

There is another legend, showing how the guise of the minstrel was assumed for a different purpose. The legend to which I allude is that of Alfred entering the Danish camp in this false character, and spying out the weakness of his enemies, while he amused them with his songs to the harp. The story is altogether apocryphal, and was never heard of in Alfred's time, nor till two centuries had elapsed

since his death. It is certain that Alfred could not have safely entered the camp as a Saxon; and if he found admission as a Dane, his accent would have betrayed him as a spy. It has been suggested, that if he ever went at all, he went as a *mimus*, or buffoon (a word which had already been applied to minstrels), and that he amused his fierce enemies by the ordinary tricks, tumblings, and other performances of the jester.

For, in course of time, *minstrel* and *buffoon* came to be terms of much the same signification. This we find by another popular legend, which is supposed to have very little truth for a basis;—namely, the legend which tells of the faithful Blondel de Nesle, minstrel to King Richard I., seeking for his captured master, and discovering him by means of a song, sung outside the prison, to which the royal captive answered from within. Whether this story be true or not, it was accepted as truth at an early period, and in 'Les Soirées de Guillaume Bouchet,' we find, as a comment upon it, the following query:—"I just beg to ask you, if the wisest man in the world could have done more for his master; and if this buffoon of a minstrel (*ce boufon de ménestrier*) was not of more profit to King Richard, his lord, than the wisest scholars at court."

For a long period, the minstrel seems to have been very well paid for the exercise of his art, at least in presence of royalty. At the marriage of the Countess of Holland, daughter of Edward I., every king-minstrel present received forty shillings! This guerdon, represented in modern money, would be not much under as many pounds sterling in value. The above was, perhaps, an exceptional occasion; but even the ordinary guerdon, of twenty and thirty shillings for a single night's attendance, shows at what an early period the musical profession was exorbitantly remunerated;—for the individuals here alluded to were actual *cantatores*, and not mere *joculatores*.

The Court always thought better of them than the Church. "Actors and jesters," says John of Salisbury (1160 *circ.*), "may not be admitted to the Sacrament.—*Histriones et mimi non possunt recipere sacram Communionem.*" And forty years later, there were some people who as much objected to marry their daughters to the King's jesters, as the coachman of George II. did to his son marrying a maid-of-honour. One of the Pipe Rolls, supposed to be of the date of 1200, informs us that "Nicola, wife of Girard of Canville, accounts to the King for one hundred marks, for the privilege of marrying her daughter Maud to whatever person she pleases,—the King's jester excepted—*exceptis mimicis Regis.* The *mimici,* whatever their exact office was, had as part of their duty, evidently, to amuse the King (John), and they would appear, from the reference made to them, to have been but a disreputable set of fellows. They were probably a sort of actors,—pantomimic, if not altogether dramatic;—for the descent of the ancient minstrel through poet and player to mere jester, is easy to be traced in the history of the profession in nearly every nation.

As I have but recently remarked, however, the minstrel proper, as well as he who joined *gestas* and *joculatoria* to his minstrelsy, was very much better paid than the clergy. Just so in the present day: we pay a *tenore robusto* a higher salary than the State awards to a general-in-chief or an admiral of the fleet, while a curate is more shabbily rewarded than the handicraftsman who makes his garments. To be sure, the "tenore robusto" *can* sing, while not one in ten of our curates knows how to read with effect. Perhaps, for some such reason, the minstrels of old had the advantage of the priest. Warton, in his second volume, notices the presence, in 1430, of a dozen priests and a dozen minstrels, at the festival of the Holy Cross at Abingdon. Both parties sang their best; but the clerics only received fourpence apiece for their pains, while the more lucky minstrels, who pro-

bably had some good jests for the Prior's table, afterwards, received two shillings and fourpence each, and food for man and horse. Eleven years later, we are told of a feast held at the Priory of Maxtoke, near Coventry. Eight priests from Coventry were present, and half-a-dozen *Mimi*. The latter were players and jesters belonging to Lord Clinton, of Maxtoke. Well, priests and mimes sang, harped, and played, or sported,—the latter doubtless being the additional work of the "Mimi," while the monks enjoyed themselves in the refectory. The Mimes received four shillings each, but the priests were supposed to be sufficiently well paid with just half the sum. Some such difference will be found by future examiners of court account-rolls regarding the payment of foreign and English singers of a very much later period. But, to return to the festival at Maxtoke, it is further to be observed, that the poor priests had no further compliment paid them, whereas the Sub-Prior invited Lord Clinton's *Mimi* to sup with him "in the painted chamber," and the chamberlain did honour to the occasion by putting eight massy wax tapers on the board. The incidents of this convent supper have not been recorded, but we may, without being uncharitable, judge them to have been of the jolliest aspect, with the Sub-Prior in the chair! At what time Lord Clinton saw his *Mimi* return to his castle, is not stated. The only further incident we hear of the conventual body at Maxtoke is, that for a sermon preached before its members by a travelling "Doctor Prædicans," the Prior paid the preacher with sixpence! But, on consideration, that may have been as much as the sermon was worth.

If any doubt could exist of the identity of the minstrel and the jester, it might be removed by remembering that the jester alone had free access to the King, at any hour of the day or night, without let or hindrance, and without his being required to make previous application for permission. I believe no other official could enter the King's chamber

uninvited, unlicensed, or unannounced. Now I find the Serjeant Minstrel of King Edward IV. doing this, and on a very critical occasion. The King was in the North. The year was 1470; Edward had just quelled, or checked, the Lincolnshire insurrection, and he was passing his time in York, in gallantries and amusements, while Warwick was proclaiming Henry VI. One night his Serjeant Minstrel, Alexander Carlisle, rushed into the room where the monarch lay in bed, and bade him instantly arise, for enemies were abroad, and it would be well for him to be on the alert. We shall find a similar bold service enacted by the jester of William of Normandy, when we come to make record of the individual jesters, rather than of their profession generally. The above incident will help to show the identity of minstrel and jester; and the fact that Richard II., when he went to Ireland, had not only *minstrels*, but *harpers*, in his train, will serve to prove that the former was *not* identical with the latter. The minstrel, indeed, sang or acted, or did both, some *Gest* or story, from Scripture or romance. Hence probably the English term Jester,—originally the reciter and actor of some made-up poetical legend, with incidents added according to the taste of the hearers. The harper probably only accompanied the reciter of the Gest on his instrument.

It is not my province to narrate the history of the professional minstrel. It must suffice here to say, that they who commenced like gods, sank in course of time to a very degraded condition. The minstrels certainly belonged to the class of poor jokers about the time the law began to treat them as vagabonds. I can adduce an instance in the case of Richard Sheale, the author of one of the versions of the ballad of 'Chevy Chace.' Sheale was a minstrel by profession, and his home was at Tamworth, on the borders of Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Mr. R. White, in his Appendix to his 'History of the Battle of Otterburn,' af-

fords us the following glimpse into the private and public life of this minstrel. "His wife was a 'sylke woman,' who sold shirts, head-clothes, laces, etc., at the fairs of Lichfield and other neighbouring towns. Being once in possession of above threescore pounds,—a large amount in those days,—and intending probably to settle various accounts contracted by his wife in her business, he left Tamworth on horseback, having his harp with him, and had the misfortune to be robbed by four villains who had lain in wait for him near Dunsmore Heath. The grief of his wife and himself at his loss—the coldness of worldly friends—the kindness of his patrons—the exertions of his loving neighbours at Tamworth, who induced him to brew a bushel of malt, and sell the ale for his benefit—and his appeal to the public for assistance, that he might clear off encumbrances, are all related in his 'Chaunt,' and show him to have been a simple, harmless man. But both this poem and the 'Farewell' afford humiliating evidence of the sorry life to which the poor minstrels were subjected in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign."

But leaving the descent of the English jester from the minstrel, or the question of their identity, to be decided upon by my readers, let us turn to the English poets for such information as they can afford us. The incidents there to be found in connection with this question, have doubtless reference to the English "fool" alone, in whatever country the poet may have located him. We meet with him however in England, in the tragedy of King Lear. The relation of fool and master, not a relation of the period of the play, but of a much later age, is very distinctly marked. Lear strikes a gentleman, only for chiding Lear's fool; but the King keeps a whip for the latter, to be used when the jester's truths smacked rudely, or were thrust forward unnecessarily. And these truths are occasionally of the very roughest quality, as, for instance, when the fool tells Lear,

that he had given away all his titles save "fool,"—the one he was born with.

It is perhaps more by the comment of the jester than by the conduct of the King's daughters, that Lear has fully revealed to him his state of terrible destitution; and if it be not an old traditionary saying of some jester, the advice is admirably in the jester's way, which shows that if a man would rise in the world, it were better for him to let go a descending wheel, and to hang to one going up-hill.

The Yorick of *Hamlet* is probably a reminiscence of an English jester. He had carried the young prince on his back a thousand times, and the childish cavalier had kissed the merriest of fellows often. These were common incidents in a family where there was a household fool. Yorick however poured a flagon of Rhenish on the head of the gravedigger; but an English joculator would have drunk off the wine, and broken the gravedigger's head with the flagon.

The whip was certainly ever present in the house that held an official Motley, in spite of the boasted license of speech supposed to be enjoyed by the latter. Touchstone is told that he shall be whipped for taxation. His qualities are, being able to string rhymes together in a butter-woman's jog-trot pace to market; he has a memory for old verses; is full of smart sayings against the corrupt in fine linen, and has the faculty of making an honest calling seem uncleanly. He is a droll sort of philosopher, with a taste of the knave in him; and so far imitates the vices of his patrons, by being marvellously ready to seduce and betray. Rosalind tells him that he speaks wiser than he is aware, which a fool only seemed to do: it was part of his office. One of his happiest expressions has often been uttered by travellers who have gone abroad only to be disappointed: "Here am I in Arden. The more fool I! When I was at home, I was in a better place!"

The Duke admirably describes a first-rate jester when he

notices Touchstone as "swift and sententious," and that he "wore his folly as a stalking-horse, and, under presentation of that, shoots his wit." Touchstone too is a gentleman in his way, seeing that he has "undone three tailors!"

The cynicism of the English fool is no doubt alluded to in *Timon of Athens*, where he is looked upon as a form of the old cynic philosopher, as indeed he was everywhere. To a sharp sentence of the fool, the churlish sage remarks, "That answer might have become Apemantas."

Perhaps the truest likeness of Shakespeare's fools to the actual Motleys, is the Clown in *Twelfth Night*. He preaches and quotes Latin with the facility of Chicot, and as if he had been much with the parson. The threat to hang him or turn him away, may show that loss of service was held to be a disaster; while the way in which (upon permission) he shows his mistress to be a fool, is an excellent illustration of the liberty arrogated by the professor of wit. Malvolio saw him put down in contention with an ordinary fool. These trials of wit were not uncommon when the household buffoon was common also; but it was all in jest. Nothing the jester uttered, however he meant it, was ever taken for serious. "There is no slander," says Olivia, "in an allowed fool." This shows the worth attached to Motley's sayings; the clown, too, very accurately defines his own standing, when he says, "I am not her fool, but her corruptor of words;" and Viola exquisitely and perfectly portrays all that the fool should be, in the words:—

"This fellow's wise enough to play the fool;
And to do that well craves a kind of wit:
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons and the time;
And, like the haggard, check at ev'ry feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice,
As full of labour as a wise man's art:
For folly, that he wisely shows, is fit;
But wise men, folly fallen, taint their wit."

It is impossible that any pen could better describe the requirements of the jester, his qualifications, the duty to be performed, and the way to perform it. No court fool of Shakespeare's time or memory could have sat for the portrait. Neither Patch, nor Pace, nor Chester, nor Clod could have done so; perhaps Heywood comes nearest to it, but he was probably not in Shakespeare's mind, when he imagined a more brilliant fool than ever sat at the hearth of a prince and railed at his patron.

Beaumont and Fletcher, in the *Mad Lover*, cannot be said to be nearly so successful in their description of the fool and his quality, though there is allusion in it to the would-be professors, worth noticing.

> "Every idle knave that shows his teeth,
> Wants and would live, can juggle, tumble, fiddle,
> Make a dog-face, or can abuse his fellow,
> Is not a fool at first dash. You shall find, Sir,
> Strange turnings in this trade."

In the *Wit Without Money* of these authors, we have a glimpse of a sort of household joker of those times, in the person of Shorthose, the widow's fool, who grows dull in the country, brightens up by town associations, loves good living, dislikes morning prayers, and has a turn for clever similes and smart sayings, in the style of stage valets. He is superior, after all, to Tony, in *A Wife for a Month*, who is a mere low-comedy fool, with a wit to which Shakespeare's jesters would scorn to condescend. In this piece, however, we again trace the presence of the whip, as a permanent menace against offending Motley, in English houses. The usurping Frederick, indeed, says to him, "Thou art a fool, and may'st do mischief lawfully;"—nevertheless, not only the fool's master, but others of less authority, frequently threaten to chastise this official with an undefined position.

Geta, in the *Prophetess*, is described as a "jester," but he is little more than a stage servant, who alludes to "turn-

spits," and who becomes duller the higher he rises in station. Villio, in the *Double Marriage*, is a type of the philosophical fool, of whom there were many; and who, with the wit of common sense, judges content in a cottage to be better than a throne with a thorn in the side of the king who sits on it. We have still fewer reflections of the jester in Penurio and Soto, of *Woman Pleased*, and in Jaques and Pedro of *Women's Prize*. Beaumont and Fletcher have more success in painting the household dwarf than the household fool. The fidelity of Zoilus, dwarf to a duke's son, in *Cupid's Revenge*, is a compliment to his class. He is as ugly as most of these creatures were, who moreover lived in constant feud with the more gigantic jester, if there was one in the house. Zoilus is described as being "an ape's skin stuffed; with a pudding in 's belly;" and yet his lady loves him, for which, however, he is sent to death. Even Base, the jester to the passionate lord, in *Nice Valour*, is but a weak representative of our official friend. He has but one jest, and that is but a poor one. A servant says, "There comes a Cupid drawn by six fools." To which Base replies, "That 's nothing, I ha' known six hundred fools drawn by one Cupid." There is a finer touch of the real Motley in Massinger's Calandrino (*Great Duke of Florence*), when he remarks:—

> "I confess,
> I am not very wise, and yet I find
> A fool, so he be parcel knave, in court
> May flourish and grow rich."

And his distinction between country and court air is quite in the fool's vein:—

> "As this court air taught me knavish wit,
> By which I am grown rich, if that again
> Should turn me fool and honest, vain hopes, farewell!
> For I must die a beggar."

Calandrino, however, is but the "merry servant" to the

nephew of the Great Duke, and has only the attributes of the official jester, without actually exercising the office.

It will be remembered that against all fools, and especially against those introduced on the stage, Sir Philip Sidney made eloquent protest; and all that Puttenham could advance in support of the professional household jester, was that something amusing was to be found in listening to the pretended foolishness of a jester, who had the wit to be wise when he chose so to direct it.

The stage fool expired in 1662, in a prologue spoken by a "fool." The play is a long-since forgotten piece called 'Thorney Abbey,' and the motley speaker of the prologue affects to reproach the author for writing a drama with a king and court in it, and omitting the time-honoured character of the jester.

Meanwhile, the buffoon was a prominent character, not only at court, but in corporations, where he measured out gaiety for the mayor and his guests; and in great households, when, for all his license, he sometimes got whipped for telling stories rather too coarse, in presence of ladies who could listen to a great amount of that sort of thing without blushing. We find him also in taverns, where he amused the topers by his rude jests and ruder minstrelsy, just as Dionysius, in his exile, is said to have done, when he enacted buffoon in a barber's shop, for his daily bread; and finally, the buffoon was *that*, and bully too, in other establishments open to the public, but less favourably considered by the law.

We leave these, to follow more exclusively the court and household fool. The office of the jester was one which, says Fuller, in his 'Holy State,' "none but he that hath wit can perform; and none but he that wants it, *will* perform." There is little doubt of this, for wit had its miseries, as Lodge graphically pointed out, in 1599, in a book which, under the title of 'Wit's Misery,' has especial reference to this subject. The author, after pointing out the immoderate

and inordinate jollity which was the stock-in-trade of the fool,—his comeliness of person, and his courtliness of dress, —adds that, after all, he was more of an ape than a man, and that his chief duties were to study the coining of bitter jests, to practise quaint and antique motions, to sing immodest songs, to laugh intemperately on very small occasion for it, and, when the wine was in his head, to mouth and gibe at all around him. The fool, says Lodge, "dances about the house, leaps over tables, outskips men's heads, trips up his companions' heels, burns sack with a candle, and hath all the feats of a lord of misrule in the country; feed him in his humour, you shall have his heart; in mere kindness, he will hug you in his arms, kiss you on the cheek, and, rapping out a horrible oath, cry, 'God's soul, Tom, I love you; you know my poor heart; come to my chamber for a pipe of tobacco; there lives not a man in this world that I more honour.' In the ceremonies, you shall know his courting; and it is a special mark of him at the table, he sits and makes faces. Keep not this fellow company; for in juggling with him, your wardrobe shall be wasted, your credit cracked, your crowns consumed, and your time (the most precious riches in the world) utterly lost." This was written in 1599; but only thirty-five years later, 1634, we find that some jesters at least had not a very miserable time of it; for Stafford tells us, in his *Code of Honour*, that "he had known a great and competently wise man, who would much respect any man that was good to his fool."

In many cases, the latter was as much a household servant as mere jester, and was equally at home at the master's board, or in the kitchen, where he received such whippings as he chanced to earn. That he was occasionally as much relished by the retainers as by his patron, there can be no doubt, and his position among these is so well described by Thornbury, in his rattling 'Songs of the Cavaliers and Roundheads,' that, in place of illustrating that position by

citing old ballads and ballad-makers, I will place before my readers the lively picture portrayed by a skilful and living artist,—in 'The Jester's Sermon.'—

"The jester shook his hood and bells and leaped upon a chair;
The pages laughed, the women screamed, and tossed their scented hair;
The falcon whistled, stag-hounds bayed, the lap-dog barked without;
The scullion dropped the pitcher brown,—the cook railed at the lout;
The steward, counting out his gold, let pouch and money fall:
And why? Because the jester rose to say grace in the hall!

"The page played with the heron's plume, the steward with his chain;
The butler drummed upon the board, and laughed with might and main;
The grooms beat on their metal cans, and roared till they turned red;
But still the jester shut his eyes and rolled his witty head;
And when they grew a little still, read half a yard of text;
And waving hand struck on the desk, then frowned, like one perplexed.

"'Dear sinners all!' the fool began, 'man's life is but a jest,
A dream, a shadow, bubbles, air, a vapour, at the best.
In a thousand pounds of law I find not a single ounce of love.
A blind man killed the parson's cow, in shooting at the dove.
The fool that eats till he is sick must fast till he is well.
The wooer who can flatter most will bear away the bell.

"'Let no man halloo he is safe till he is through the wood.
He who will not when he may, must tarry when he should.
He who laughs at crooked men should need walk very straight.
Oh, he who once has won a name may lie abed till eight.
Make haste to purchase house and land, be very slow to wed.
True coral needs no painter's brush, nor need be daubed with red.

"'The friar, preaching, cursed the thief (the pudding in his sleeve).
To fish for sprats with golden hooks is foolish, by your leave.
To travel well, an ass's ears, ape's face, hog's mouth, and ostrich legs.
He does not care a pin for thieves, who limps about and begs.
Be always first man at a feast, and last man at a fray.
The short way round, in spite of all, is still the longest way.

"'When the hungry curate licks the knife, there 's not much for the clerk.
When the pilot, turning pale and sick, looks up, the storm grows dark.'
Then loud they laughed; the fat cook's tears ran down into the pan;
The steward shook, that he was forced to drop the brimming can;
And then again the women screamed and every stag-hound bayed:
And why? Because the motley fool so wise a sermon made!"

The preacher, in conclusion, probably took the pearl spoon he wore in his cap, and ate his porridge with it; and, his day's duties terminated, turned to the kennel, and slept the night out with the hounds. He might have been worse lodged. There however we will leave him, to treat, henceforward, more with the especial individual than with the order generally.

ENGLISH COURT FOOLS, FROM THE REIGN OF EDMUND IRONSIDE.

It is a singular but incontrovertible fact, that there are many individuals now living, who are indebted for various benefits, and even no inconsiderable wealth (in their corporate capacity), to the liberality of long-departed jesters at our English Courts. The estates so long held by the Cathedral Church of Canterbury, at Walworth, were originally the pious gift of the first English jester on record.* The name of this joculator was Hitard, perhaps Hit-hard, from the success of his sayings. He belonged to Edmund Ironside, who, out of gratitude, bestowed on him the town of Walworth, in the year 1016. That most gallant King could have had little leisure to listen to the wit of Hit-hard, for his entire reign was comprised within seven months of the year last mentioned, and he was fighting against Canute and his Danes nearly the whole time. Hit-hard was more fortunate, for he continued landlord of Walworth during the reigns of Canute, Harold Harefoot, Hardicanute, and

* See Somner's 'Canterbury,' edited by Batteley, p. 39, where the donation is thus recorded:—"Anno Domini MII., Villæ de Cherthain et Walworth concessa et confirmata fuerunt per sanctum Edwardum, cum maneriis jam habitis et multis libertatibus concessis. Predictam villam Walworth Edmundus Rex dedit cuidam joculatori suo, nomine Hitardo. Tempore tandem Regis Edwardi idem Hitardus, volens limina Apostolorum Romæ visitare, venit ad Ecclesiam Christi in Dorobernia, et per consensum et concessionem Regis Edwardi, dedit eandem villam eidem Ecclesiæ Christi, chartam quoque ejusdem terræ posuit super altare Christi," etc.

a portion of the reign of Edward the Confessor. In the latter reign, after a quiet enjoyment of his dignity for about thirty years, Hit-hard resolved to proceed to Rome, there to live the remainder of his days, and there to die. Previous to setting out, he performed a grateful act most gracefully. He drew up a deed by which he conferred the whole of his possessions at Walworth,—that was, in fact, the whole of Walworth itself,—upon the Cathedral of Canterbury. He even went down to the ancient city, and entering the church, placed the deed of conveyance, with his own hands, upon the high altar. And then the venerable ex-jester to the gallant Ironside set off to the Holy City, helped on his way, no doubt, by many a "Pax vobiscum!"

In the stormy times that followed, we have no record of any individual court jester, though there is no reason to doubt of the presence of that official at our Courts before the Conquest. William, both as Duke and King, possessed this ordinary gay appendage to his household. He loved mirth, as he loved good living; and as we know that he conferred a manor on his cook, for making an excellent soup, we may be prepared to find that he was not an indifferent patron to a meritorious fool.

Accordingly, the great Conqueror, solemn man as he sometimes was, did not think his household complete without the jester. Indeed, we hear of more than one. They were princely fellows, and had a right princely master. One of these, Gollet, or Gallet, a native of Bayeux, hearing of a conspiracy against William's life, went to his chamber-door, and roused the great Duke out of his first sleep, by beating against it with an iron hammer, and crying out at the same time, according to the rhymed edition of the story, by Robert Waice:

"Ouvrez, dit-il, ouvrez, ouvrez!
Jà morrez tout; levez, levez!"

This good turn merited great recompense; but we know

not what Gollet got for his faithful service. On the other hand, we hear of a guerdon to another of William's fools, but we are not told of any special act of which it was the reward. The lucky personage was Berdic, the *Joculator*, who retired from Court and merry duty, the lord of three towns, with five carucates of land, and all rent-free; notice of which will be found in Domesday Book, under the head of "Gloucester." So cunning was Berdic in mixing sweet and pungent together, that he died a sort of Crœsus, but he was neither the first nor last of court fools who left land and gold-pieces, at his death. It is a pity that the Norman could not take a joke as readily as he could reward a jester. We all know how, by resenting the sarcasm of the French King Philip, on his obesity, he lost his own life.

We hear of no fool of merit at the bachelor and uproarious Court of William Rufus. That King, indeed, hardly needed one, for he was accustomed not only to make his own jokes, but to laugh louder at them than any other person. We know that the fool often combined the office of servant with that of jester, and it is, perhaps, not unreasonable to conclude that the chamberlain of Rufus was also his joculator. He certainly fooled his master. Witness the occasion when Rufus burst into a fit of fury at the chamberlain bringing him a pair of boots that had cost but three shillings. "Son of an ass!" exclaimed the ruby-faced and flaxen-haired monarch, "bring me a pair that costs a silver mark!" The chamberlain obeyed, after a court-fool's fashion. He changed the boots for a pair of inferior value, charged Rufus a higher price, and laughed in his sleeve at seeing the King well pleased, and unconscious that he had been tricked.

There was one other person at this Court who had something of the jester in him;—namely, that well-known priest Ralph, whose wit raised him to an eminence that cost England rather dear. When he was in power, and the King

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ordered a tribute to be levied, Ralph ordered one of double the amount, and exacted it with stringent severity. At this process Rufus would laugh heartily; and he had little cause to pay a fool, when he possessed a witty follower like Ralph, whose tricks were so much to the taste and so greatly to the profit of this rude but discriminating monarch.

The court of his brother and successor, Henry I., was less riotous, but not less luxurious or licentious, than his own. Henry was naturally prodigal, and in his Queen, Matilda, he possessed a partner who helped him pleasantly on the road to ruin. Matilda cared less for the jester than for the minstrel, and accordingly, she wasted much of her wealth, her husband's, and that of the public, on melodious clerks, foreign joculators who could chant a merry stave, and "singing scholars," who crowded to a Court where they found, in return, as good entertainment as they could give.

Among these gay fellows, or minstrels, was an individual of some celebrity, a Picard or Norman, it is not exactly known which, and who is sometimes described as a "barber." His name was Rahere, and of all court minstrels or jesters he is the one above all others whose memory hundreds of living people have good reason to bless daily. Stow speaks of Rahere as "a pleasant-witted gentleman, and therefore, in his time, called the King's Minstrel." There have been writers who have questioned the correctness of this description, but it is, in a very great measure, supported by the author of a paper in the Cottonian Manuscripts.*

According to this valuable record, the writer of which relies on the authority of men who "saw Rahere, heard him, and were present in his works and deeds, of the which," adds the writer, "some have taken their sleep in Christ, and some of them be yet alive, and witnesseth of that that we shall after say." According, then, to the manuscripts

* See also Dugdale, Mon. Ang. vol. ii. p. 166.

above-named, "this man, Rahere, springing or born of low lineage, when he attained the flower of youth, he began to haunt the households of noble men and the palaces of princes." The writer goes on to state that Rahere spared neither tricks, nor flattery, nor pleasant deceits, in order to draw towards him the friendship of those above him. Nor was he content with all this, says the chronicler, "but often haunted the King's palace, and among the noiseful press of that tumultuous court, enforced himself with polite and carnal suavity, by the which he might draw to him the hearts of many one there; in spectacles, masks, and other courtly mockeries and devilish intendings, he led forth the business of all the day." Rahere was constantly, we are told, in attendance on the King, or in the suite of noblemen; "proffering service that might please them, he busily so occupied his time that he might obtain the rather the petitions that he might desire of them. Thiswise, to King and great men, gentle and courteous, and knowing and familiar, he was." In short, according to the manuscript writer, Rahere was an exceedingly joyous and cunning fellow, who, having played the fool at Court for great men's pleasure and his own profit, was soon after made wise through Grace, by the intervention of Bartholomew the Apostle. He had spent half his days in harping and dancing and jesting, and then, growing weary of it, hurried to Rome, there to repent of his sins and be converted from his fiddling, dancing, drinking, jesting, and philandering ways. And this was so effectually accomplished, that on his road homeward he had a vision "full of dread and of sweetness." The chief figure therein was the apostolic Bartholomew, who, intimating that Rahere had been taken from the foolery of an earthly to be an agent of a celestial Court, added with great topographic and indeed general lucidity, that he (the Apostle) "had chosen a place in the 'Subburbs' of London, at 'Smythfeld,' where in my name," said he to the ex-jester, "thou

shalt found a church, and it shall be the house of God, where there shall be the Tabernacle of the Lamb, the Temple of the Holy Ghost." Rahere woke from his dream, and was inclined at first to take it all for a mere fantasy; but weighing the matter well, he ultimately, after long consideration, resolved to devote his fool's gains to pious ends; and he founded, not without some little opposition on the part of those who

> "Preferred, no doubt,
> A rogue with venison, to a saint without,"

and who hoped he had come back rather a merry sinner than a solemn saint, a church and priory, of which he was, as was due to him, appointed the first Prior. Kings of England, in after-time, learned to respect the holy place; but there was a world of trouble before the entire object was carried out. Rahere had adversaries of every sort; but he had not lost his wit for having acquired a sense of piety, and so he bent himself to every humour, still played the fool awhile in various forms, when he could draw help towards the attainment of his end, and had merry words for everybody, in order that everybody might in return lend him ready succour. He, of course, overcame all opposition; holy men assembled around him; he preached sermons of varied character, to suit his audiences; he worked pretty little miracles, wrought wonderful cures, and, if he was occasionally in a difficulty, and seemed for a moment no wiser than an ordinary mortal, St. Bartholomew stepped in and helped him through triumphantly. Nothing at last became too difficult for him to surmount, and a hidden thief or a secret sin could no more escape his bodily or mental eye, than the seat of disease can be concealed from the sight of Mr. Luther Holden, who now demonstrates anatomy on the spot where the ex-court-jester changed his mirth and motley for prayers, cassock, and good works.

The successors of old Rahere in the Priory had much of the spirit of their founder. They were at the head of a high-spirited corporation, full of zeal, cheerfulness, and indomitable independence. They enjoyed separate jurisdiction, and resisted all interference on the part of prying prelates who endeavoured to force-in the wedge of episcopal authority. When this was the case, the brotherhood cried, "Rahere to the rescue!" and defied the whole membership of bishops. One result was that they were let alone, and this immunity they purchased by their gallantry, having successfully resisted an attempt to meddle with their affairs, by sorely thrashing the offending bishop and terribly mauling his body of followers. The time came, however, when the downfall of their house was inevitable. It shared in the general dissolution of religious houses, and Henry VIII. founded it anew, out of the old prior-minstrel's funds, as an hospital "for the combined relief and help of a hundred sore and diseased." Much more than this is now effected in the establishment of St. Bartholomew, which has grown out of the pious foundation of Rahere. There is no disease or suffering that medical care can assuage, which is turned away from this great temple of charity. Let the call be made at any hour of the day or night, there is ready answer, and as ready help at hand. The sufferer has but to knock, or those who act for him in his helplessness, and "it is opened to him." He has no need of a letter of recommendation to entitle him to receive balm for his wounds. There is now accommodation for about 600 in-door patients, of whom there are ten times that annual number, and among them a mortality of about one a day. The out-door patients amount to nearly twenty thousand; the casualty patients to some thousands more. It is a pleasing sight, to see the wards where anguish is soothed, and the mutilated made whole. It is almost a mirthful sight, to witness the busy crowd at the dispensary bar, carrying off their bottles of

variously coloured liquids,—the *elixir*, and not the *aqua vitæ*, which is to pour strength into their veins and infuse it into their muscles. Let me add that it is a touching, solemn, and instructive sight, which may be looked upon silently and reverently, in that little dead-house, with its cover over it, as if it would be less obtrusive on the eye of idle passers by. There may be seen many a stalwart form that possessed, a few days since, the strength of giants, and which, crushed beyond the reach of science or art to repair, lie there prematurely ready for the inevitable grave.

In speaking of St. Bartholomew's, it would be ungrateful to pass over the name of Dr. Radcliffe, the most munificent of its modern benefactors. But the establishment itself would probably never have existed, certainly would not have existed here, but for the King's minstrel, the "pleasant-witted gentleman," who was the gayest at the gay court of Henry Beauclerc, and whose bones lie in the adjacent church of St. Bartholomew the Great. The tomb is worth visiting, for it covers the dust of a noble man. His effigy, watched by an angel, and prayed for by two canons, lies under a canopy of great richness and elaborate workmanship. It was probably erected by his admirers of much later times than that which immediately followed his decease, for the shields upon it are those of England and France united, a combination that was not known for many years subsequent to the decease of the founder of the old priory. One can hardly stand altogether unmoved in presence of such a memento. There is great temptation, when looking at the effigy, and remembering the self-denial and charity, of the man, to fall into the pleasantest bit of Popery, on turning away, and to pray with all one's heart that God may have mercy on the soul of the King's minstrel, Rahere!

The reign of Stephen does not furnish us with the names of any fool of distinguished quality; though Stephen himself, and particularly previous to his accession to the throne,

was remarkable for the affability with which he associated with men of every condition. This was more especially the case when he was keeping house with his bride in the Tower-Royal. But neither in court or castle was there much patronage of the jester during the nearly nineteen years of the calamitous reign of Stephen. The court of his successor saw the joyous brotherhood fully restored, and its members seem even, not merely to have practised before him at home, but to have accompanied him abroad. "When King Henry sets out of a morning," says his secretary, Peter of Blois, "you see multitudes of people running up and down, as if they were distracted; horses rushing against horses, carriages overturning carriages, players, gamesters, cooks, confectioners, morris-dancers, barbers, courtesans, and parasites, making so much noise and, in a word, such an intolerable tumultuous jumble of horse and foot, that you imagine the great abyss hath opened, and that hell hath poured forth all its inhabitants." The court of Henry's consort, Eleanor of gay Guienne, was a not less joyous one than her husband's; but the joy was only empty noise and outward show, and beneath all the glittering were grief and settled gloom.

During the reign of their lion-hearted successor, we meet with an illustration, showing how fools could be employed in order to support a vicious political system. Richard the First's Chancellor, William Longchamp, may with propriety be called, the "proud," for he sealed public acts, says Lord Campbell, "with his own signet seal, instead of the Great Seal of England." Proud as he was, this Picard prelate (who was Bishop of Ely) was of very mean extraction. To him Richard left, conjointly with the Bishop of Durham, the guardianship of the realm, during the King's absence in the Holy Land. Longchamp however clapped his colleague into prison, and ruled England by his sole authority. He maintained the state of the most ostentatious of sovereigns, and set such an example of arrogance and want of pinciple,

that his body-guard became terrible for their rapine and licentiousness; and his servants, even when their master lodged for a night in a monastery, devoured in that one night the revenue of several years. The people at large suffered in proportion, and suffering was followed by grumbling, and that was succeeded by wrath. But, says the author of 'The Lives of the Chancellors,' (apparently translating a passage from Roger Hoveden *in Ricardo I.*, p. 340,) "to drown the curses of the natives, he brought over from France, at a great expense, singers and jesters, who sang verses in places of public resort, declaring that the Chancellor never had his equal in the world." The above, it will have been seen, is an example of jesters being employed, not with license to speak bold and droll truths to their master, but with commission to utter sorry jokes and dreary falsehoods, for the purpose of deceiving a nation.

I have previously noticed that Blondel, whom tradition makes the discoverer of his captive master, by means of a song, is called, by Bouchez, "that buffoon of a minstrel." By others he is styled a "troubadour knight." However much or little of the character of the jester may have entered into the character of the minstrel Blondel, it would not be easy to say. We may speak with more certainty of another of Richard's minstrels, Anselme Fayditt, whose poetry the Provençal critics eulogized for its wit and good sense, "poésie à bons mots et de bon sens." A third minstrel, Fouquet de Marseilles, is also celebrated for his ready wit, which made him the "delight of the court." There probably was some difference of quality in the latter minstrels, for while Fayditt ultimately travelled about the country, on foot, in search of a livelihood, singing songs, and accompanied by a runaway nun who sang as well as Fayditt himself. Fouquet, in strong contrast with such a vagabond, abandoned minstrelsy, turned monk, and became Bishop of Toulouse.

Of the above quality were the most favoured *plaisants* at the Court of Richard. The private households had their jesters of a less refined quality, and the following graphic description of one attached to a Saxon master, is probably as faithful a portrait as could be drawn of a Saxon nobleman's fool in the days of King Richard the First.

"Beside the swineherd was seated, on one of the fallen Druidical monuments, a person about ten years younger in appearance, and whose dress was of a fantastic appearance. His jacket had been stained of a bright purple hue, upon which there had been some attempts to paint grotesque ornaments of different colours. To the jacket he added a short cloak, which scarcely reached halfway down his thigh. It was of crimson cloth, though a good deal soiled, lined with bright yellow; and as he could transfer it from one shoulder to the other, or at his pleasure throw it all around him, its width contrasted with its want of longitude, formed a fantastic piece of drapery. He had thin silver bracelets on his arms; and on his neck a collar of the same metal; bearing the inscription, 'Wamba, the son of Witless, is the Thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood.' This personage had sandals, and his legs were encased in a sort of gaiters, of which one was red and the other yellow. He was provided also with a cap having around it more than one bell, about the size of those attached to hawks, which jingled as he turned his head from one side to the other. And, as he seldom remained a minute in the same posture, the sound might be considered as incessant. Around the edge of this cap was a stiff bandeau of leather, cut at the top into open work, resembling a coronet, while a prolonged bag arose from within it, and fell down on one shoulder, like an old-fashioned night-cap or jelly-bag, or the head-gear of a modern hussar. It was to this part of the cap that the bells were attached, which circumstance, as well as the shape of his head-dress, and his own half-crazed, half-cunning, expression of

countenance, sufficiently pointed him out as belonging to the race of domestic clowns or jesters maintained in the houses of the wealthy, to help away the tedium of those lingering hours which they were obliged to spend within-doors. He bore a scrip attached to his belt, but had neither horn nor knife, being probably considered as belonging to a class whom it is esteemed dangerous to entrust with edge-tools. In place of these he was equipped with a sword of lath, resembling that with which Harlequin operates his wonders upon the modern stage."

Of what quality was the wit of Wamba, may be seen in the romance of 'Ivanhoe,' from which, it is hardly necessary to say, the above extract is made. We come now to the successor of Richard, whom we shall find a liberal master to his fool.

King John was a very lugubrious joker himself; but he not only kept a merry jester,—he also knew how to be exceedingly liberal to him. Of the King's deadly practical joking we have an instance in his conduct to Geoffrey, Archdeacon of Norwich, who had retired from his office in the Exchequer in obedience to the terms of the Papal edict. The King shut him up in prison, and, making him wear a ponderous sacerdotal cope of lead, which covered him from the head to the heels, left him thus helpless, to die of famine. It was after another fashion that John rewarded his fool. The name of this official was William Piculph (or Picol), and he received from the monarch who possessed so little land of his own, a landed estate. This fool by feudal tenure held his territory and its dependencies at Fons Ossane, in Mortain, of John, under an easy quit-rent; namely, that during his life he should act as jester to the King, providing his Grace with as much fun as could make him smile. After the death of Piculph, the domain was to descend to his heirs, on condition of their presenting the sovereign annually with a pair of gilt spurs. A copy of the original deed is

to be found in the 'Monnaies Inconnues des Evêques, des Innocents, et des Fous.'

It is just twenty years ago, since M. Rigollet, under the modest appellation of "M. J. R. D'Amiens," published in his work on the then hitherto unknown coins and tokens of various Brotherhoods of the olden time who took Folly for their patron, a copy of the document by which our King John may be said to have ennobled his fool. This document has not escaped the acute vision of Mr. W. J. Thoms, who has cited it, in his selections from the L'Estrange papers; but as its singularity is fully equal to its brevity, my readers will, I hope, approve of my venturing to place it before them. It is to this effect:—"Joannes, D. G., etc. Sciatis nos dedisse et presenti chartâ confirmasse WILL. PICOL, *Follo* nostro, Fontem Ossane (Menil-Ozenne, pays de Mortain), cum omnibus pertinenciis suis, habend. et tenend. sibi et heredibus suis, faciendo inde nobis annuatim servitium *unius Folli* quoad vixerit; et post ejus decessum heredes sui eam de nobis tenebunt, et per servitium unius paris calcarium deauratorum nobis annuatim reddendo. Quare volumus et firmiter precipimus quod predict. Piculphus et heredes sui habeant et teneant in perpetuum, bene et in pace, libere et quiete, predictam terram."

The substance of this document, the original of which was found in the then Royal Library of France, is given in my description of it, above; I will only add, therefore, that ample pains seem to have been taken to settle this estate upon Picol the fool. It may be doubted, however, whether the fools of Edmund Ironside, William the Conqueror and John were the only merry officials who held land. The celebrated Baldwin Lepetteur (in another reign) must have belonged to the profession, and we know that, in return for some royal grace, he was bound on every Christmas-day to execute before his lord the King, at Hemmingston Manor, a *saltus*, a *sufflatus*, and a *bumbulus*. At no time, indeed, do our Kings seem to have

been reluctant to pay for mirth. Henry III. once gave a crown to a witty fellow who had caused him to laugh; but we are not told what the jest was that earned so great a guerdon. Edward II. was even more liberal, for he gave *four* crowns for the same cause. It does not appear that wit was always the provocation to royal laughter, a fool's trick would do as well. We see as much by an entry in one of the last King's accounts, cited in the 'Antiquary's Repertory.' "Item—When the King was at Woolmer, to Morris, then clerk of the kitchen, who, when the King was hunting, did ride before the King, and often fall down from his horse, whereat the King laughed greatly: 20*s*."

To return, however, to the reign of Henry III., the successor of John, I may notice as an incident of the social history of the period, that there were few places where the itinerant jester was more warmly welcomed than at the lonely cells of the Friars. We have an instance of this in a story told by Wood, and quoted by Warton, to this effect. A couple of strangers applied one night at the gates of a cell of Benedictines near Oxford, for admission. The itinerants were taken for jesters, and gained a ready admission under that supposition. Cellarer, sacrist, and the whole of the confraternity looked forward to having a merry night of it with the *gesticulatoriis ludicrisque artibus* of their guests. But these proved to be grave men of long prayers and short meals; very poor in purse, but rich in saving knowledge; without power or taste to make a joke, but with will and ability to enjoin their hosts to live cleanly and soberly and religiously, to serve God faithfully, honour the King loyally, and to put away from themselves all naughtiness. The Benedictines did not care a fig for such serious persons, or their admonitions. They had admitted the wayfarers, supposing them to be jesters; and illogically concluding, because the supposed jesters were monks, they themselves had been deceived by them, they set upon the poor fellows, thrashed them soundly, and turned them out-of-doors.

Of a *joculator* at the court of Henry III. we probably obtain a glimpse in the personage of a certain Master Henry, who is called the "versificator," a term which was sometimes given to the *joculator*. "In one of the Tower Rolls," says Miss Strickland, "dated, Woodstock, April 30, in the thirty-second year of Henry III.'s reign, that monarch directs his treasurer and chamberlain to pay Master Henry, the poet, whom he affectionately styles, 'Our beloved Master Henry, the versificator, one hundred shillings, due to him for the arrears of his salary, enjoining them to pay it without delay, though the Exchequer was then shut."

This Master Henry was, doubtless, Henry of Avranches, who is sometimes designated as poet laureate to the King, and of whose works some specimens yet remain. We must not forget the assertion of Ménage, that court poet and court fool were sometimes one and the same; and that Master Henry was qualified for the latter, we may gather from the description given of him in a satirical poem by an angry Cornish writer, Michael Blaunpayne, who thus depicts the royal versificator, enjoying a salary of a hundred shillings a year: "You have the legs of a goat, the thighs of a sparrow, and the sides of a boar. You have a hare's mouth, a dog's nose, the teeth and cheeks of a mule. Your face is a calf's, your head is a bull's, and from top to toe you are as swarthy as a Moor." It must be acknowledged, if this *signalement* may be accepted, that, in outward appearance, Master Henry was well qualified to enact the buffoon at the court of his royal namesake.

The next King, the crusading Edward I., is known to have had a minstrel, harper, or *joculator* in constant attendance upon him. This official rendered his master good service on that occasion, at Ptolemais, when an assassin wounded Edward with a poisoned knife. It is said that the faithful fellow, hearing the struggle, rushed in and slew the assassin. We detect more of the professional jester in another ac-

count by Ritson, which says that the *citharœda*, as he is called, did not interfere till Edward himself had killed his assailant; and that then the minstrel, or whatever may be his proper designation, snatching up a trivet, tripod, or three-legged stool, began beating the dead man's brains out. The joke seemed of so unworthy a quality to the King, that he rated the valiant coward soundly. The name of the joculator is not given; but we are more fortunate in the succeeding reign, for there we not only meet with an undoubted court fool, but we learn his name, and are introduced to a member of his family.

First, let me observe that in the 'Liber Quotidianus,' the daily wardrobe account of the fourteenth of Edward II. (1320-21), there are entries of rewards to several noblemen's minstrels, or *joculatores*, who performed before the King in his own chamber. The singing and the jests were probably rude enough, for Edward II. was a roystering fellow, addicted to getting drunk in as roystering company abroad, and accustomed to pay the people who picked him up and saw him safe home. There is an entry in this very account to that effect,—of recompense to persons who thus looked after him, "in itineribus suis noctanter."

We get too, as I have just intimated, at the name of the King's fool, who was probably often abroad with him on these occasions, by an entry in some accounts, quoted in the 'Archæologia' (vol. ii. p. 6); and not only of the fool, but of his mother, by whose surname indeed we arrive at that of the jester. The entry runs thus: "To Dulcian Withastáf, mother of Robert, the King's fool, coming to the King, at Baldock, of the King's gift, 10*s*." "*Wit-has-staff*," or "*Witty-staff*," or "*With-a-staff*," sounds very like a sobriquet for Robert himself; and perhaps Dame Dulcian derived the surname from her son's occupation. At all events, it is pleasant to see Edward acting generously towards the old lady, when she hurried over to the court, at Baldock, to

behold her son in all the glory of cap, bells, cock's-comb, and run of the larder.

I might have included among my "Female Jesters" a nameless *Joculatrix*, or *Ministralissa*, who, if not attached to the household of Edward II., yet played her part before him for the amusement of himself and a noble company. It was on occasion of the festival of Whitsuntide, which the King was celebrating in the great Hall at Westminster, in the year 1316. While the royal host and his illustrious guests were seated at the banquet, this joculatrix rode into the Hall on a closely-clipped horse, and caracolled round about the tables, jesting the while, to the great amusement of the company. The joculatrix terminated her performance by placing a letter in the King's hand; after which she gracefully rode away, with countless greetings, to the right and left. The letter contained a remonstrance against the unbounded favour exhibited by the King to unworthy persons, while he neglected his faithful knights and trusty servants. Not one of the latter, probably, would have dared to present the remonstrance; but the license allowed to the jester, or mime, ensured free access, and other immunities, to an agent chosen from among the joyous brotherhood, and still more to a sister of the gay profession. The gates of royal houses were always open to them: "Non esse mores," is the remark quoted by Percy, "domus regiæ histriones ab ingressu quomodolibet prohibere."

Edward II. not only admired a joculatrix who could ride, but still more a joculator who could not, or who feigned to be unable to keep in the saddle. I have, in a previous page, cited from the roll of expenses of this King, an entry of twenty shillings to a jester who rode before him, who kept continually tumbling off, and who thereby raised an amount of hilarity in the sovereign, that was set down as being worth twenty shillings. Just double the amount, and ten shillings over, were also paid to a jester who, dancing on a

table in the King's presence, caused him to laugh immoderately.

The great Scottish contemporary of Edward—Bruce—could also, like other heroic men, stoop to find amusement in the sallies of an official fool. Of this individual, we know indeed only the name, and are not acquainted with his quality. Mr. Irving, the author of a recently published 'History of Dumbartonshire,' informs us that Bruce, in his retirement at Cardross, kept for his solace, or his sport, a fool and a lion. The same author quotes the chamberlain's book of accounts, in which there is an item containing the record of one shilling and sixpence having been expended for the conveyance of Patrick, the fool, to Tarbut, on Loch Fyne: "In expensis hominum transeuntium cum Patricio stulto veniente de Angliâ usque Le Tarbutt, 18 denarii;" by which it would seem that Bruce's fool at Cardross was probably an Englishman. He is sometimes called Peter; and this, and the fact of his being in the household of Bruce, constitute all that we know touching this fool to a hero.

Of the minstrels and jesters of Edward III. we know even less than we do of that of Bruce, for we are unacquainted with any of their names. During the long reign of half a century, the chivalrous Edward was either exulting in glory acquired, or mourning at impending or overwhelming calamity. In the mere official jester he took no delight; but there was a peculiar court amusement of his own devising, which pleased others as highly as it pleased himself,—namely, the tournaments, at which he would tilt in disguise, revealing himself to the delighted spectators only when he had achieved victory. In the shape of a good court jest, too, were the appearances of himself and family at tournaments in the City. At these, Edward would appear in the bustling character of Lord Mayor, fulfilling all its functions. Two of his sons, on these occasions, represented the sheriffs, and the other two, with several noblemen, enacted the parts of

aldermen. At these festivals, the royal family seemed to have turned into jesters and players, for the entertainment of a public who witnessed the performance with hilarity and admiration.

At the court of Edward's grandson and successor, Richard II., the ordinary official joculators were doubtless to be found; but we are unacquainted with the name of any especial or favourite individual. They formed part of a very gay and extravagant household, as long as Richard could maintain such an establishment. The very idea of the outlay of this rollicking court even frightened the Commons into a respectful remonstrance; but the King reminded them that, as long as he did not ask them to pay for his pleasures, their interference was only an impertinence. The epoch was undoubtedly one of vast extravagance. It was the period when ladies in England first wore trains,—a fashion which elicited a biting satire from a merry divine. He entitled his work, 'Contra caudas dominarum,' *Against the tails of the ladies*, and it was productive of more mirth at court than a whole year's wit of a whole household of jesters.

What little gaiety there was at the court of Henry IV. was to be found at Eltham; but even there it was of a very indifferent quality. If kings could not be merry but by the aid of a jester, no monarch more needed a joculator than the once handsome Bolingbroke, whose face became so ugly by eruptions, that even a jester could hardly have looked at it with a smile. Henry, too, was one of those men who are satisfied in their own minds that success in an enterprise is warrant of the approbation of Heaven! He required some of the rough homilies of the court fool to drive him out of a belief which he did not surrender till he ceased to enjoy his usual triumphs. His son kept court apart, and it may fairly be said, that if there was ever Prince or King at whose court we might have expected to meet a more

than ordinary number of the licensed mirth-makers to royalty, it was that of Harry of Monmouth, who has been poetically, popularly, and historically represented to us as, from his youth upwards, addicted to associate with dissipated and facetious companions; and who, according to tradition, thought as little of smiting the heart of his father as he did of striking his father's representative, solemn Judge Gascoyne. But all these matters are proved to have been myths, and the son of Bonligbroke neither drank deep with Falstaff, nor fooled it with the philosophic fool Pistol, nor sang staves with Bardolph, nor bandied nonsense with Poins. The Boar's Head, Eastcheap, is a picture, but it represents no historical fact. The dying father was not robbed of his crown by his son; and they who look upon the tomb of Gascoyne in Harewood Church, Yorkshire, waste all their sympathy, if they give any there to the sleeping judge, on the ground of his having been insulted by a lawless prince. All this, however, will continue to be believed, for Shakespeare, who has set Mark Antony down to whist, has said it; and Rapin, dull, pompous, and obstinate, has declared that Prince Henry's court was the receptacle of libertines, debauchees, buffoons, parasites, and the like. Carte, on the other hand, asserts that Henry of Monmouth's court was crowded by the nobles and great men of the land, when his father's court was comparatively deserted. But no one has so perfectly sifted the many tales touching the inclination of this prince for buffoons and roysterers as Tyler, in his 'Life of Henry V.' This writer, whose patient and painstaking spirit I envy, tells us that if Prince Henry was often in the city, and in Eastcheap in particular, it was not for dissipation, but for serious business. It is from this reverend author we learn, that in March 1410, the father of much-abused Prince Harry signed a deed in which it is said, "Know ye that, by our especial grace, we have granted to our dearest son Henry, Prince of Wales, a certain house or place, called

Coldharbour, in our city of London, with its appurtenances, to hold for the term of his life, without any payment to us for the same." In this right fair and stately house, which was not far from Eastcheap, councils were held, at which the Prince himself presided. Mr. Tyler not only proves that Henry did not resort to what he calls "a low and vulgar part of London," for the purposes of riot and revelry with unworthy and dissolute companions; but he shows how the charge of being guilty of such offence may have arisen. "History," he says, "records nothing of the Prince derogatory to his princely and Christian character during his residence at Coldharbour: it does indeed charge two of the King's sons with a riot there; but they are stated by name to have been Thomas and John. Henry's name does not occur at all in connection with any disturbance or misdoing." Henry's father, however, seems to have provided for the good cheer of the Prince of Wales; for in the same year that he gave his son the house at "Coldehabergh," he also gave him an order on the Collector of the Customs for twenty casks and one pipe of the red wine of Gascony, to be delivered free of duty. This, as Pennant says, was "to stock his cellars;" and it was not likely that, thus provided, he would have resorted to neighbouring taverns at Eastcheap. One might as soon expect to hear of the Prince Consort at the Cider-cellars. If the assertion of the chroniclers, that Henry, on his accession, became altogether a reformed man, seems irreconcilable with his modest bearing when heir-apparent, we must remember, on the other hand, that there is no *contemporary* record of his having committed any act of wildness, riot, and dishonour, while there are many bearing testimony to his virtues; namely, the records of Parliament, which bear witness to his rectitude, modesty, and steadiness; the despatches of Hotspur; the people of Wales; the gentlemen of various counties; and contemporary chroniclers, generally. Of the extravagant expenditure of his

father's household there are very numerous complaints; but none of that of his own household, either when he was Prince or King. In the latter capacity, Henry V. patronized the sacred minstrels rather than the laughing fools. He loved minstrelsy, psalms, and decent songs; and he made this love, as Mr. Tyler tells us, "contribute to the gratification of himself and the partner of his joys and cares. . . Whether in their home at Windsor, or during their happy progress through England, in the halls of York and Chester, or in the tented ground on the banks of the Seine, before Melun, our imagination has solid foundation to build upon, when we picture to ourselves Henry and his beloved Princess passing innocently and happily, in minstrelsy and song, some of the hours spared from the appeals of justice, the exigencies of the State, or the marshalling of the battle-field." For Henry's other good qualities, and for his defects also, I must refer my readers to Mr. Tyler's volumes, resting content with showing here, that Henry was not a patron of court fools. It may indeed be said that the jester and the minstrel were often to be found in the same person, in England, from the time that the Saxons hovered in the land, or since Canute, his *thingmen*, and his bards, all sang joyously together, when they celebrated a conquest, than which that of the Norman was not more wonderful. But it is clear that Henry's minstrels were of a better character than those alluded to above, and that buffoonery was not encouraged at his court. Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' supports this assertion by saying, that the number of harpers in Westminster Hall at Henry's coronation was innumerable. "They undoubtedly accompanied their instruments with heroic rhymes. The King, however," adds Warton, "was no great encourager of the popular minstrelsy, which seems at this time to have flourished in the highest degree of perfection." For all secular vanities his disgust was great; and he even forbade his triumph at Agincourt to be chanted by the

harpers or others. Lingard indeed says, that "success gave a tinge of arrogance to his character;" and I may add, that although Henry V. loved books more than court fools, he set an example for the now common and detestable practice, of borrowing books and not returning them to their owners; he had better learned wisdom from fools, than committed this miserable sort of petty larceny.

It is difficult to conclude that the official fool was altogether absent from court in these days, when we remember an incident connected with Henry's widow, Katherine of Valois. There is some reason to believe that Owen Tudor, when he danced awkwardly before Katherine, and ended by falling into her lap, only played one of those tricks which, by exciting laughter, acquired favour for the performer. The widow of Henry V. resolved to marry the handsome clown; but a deputation was sent to Anglesea to report on the condition of the lady-mother of Owen, and the style of her living. This was a deputation of lords; but they appear to have had the court fool with them, if we may judge from the report they rendered on their return. Such an official was not an uncommon appendage to legations of any sort, and I think he could not have been lacking here. The English envoys found the mother of Owen sitting on a bank in a field, surrounded by her perpendicularly-horned goats, and eating a fried herring, with her knees for a table. What report could be made to a Queen-Dowager resolved upon marrying this same lady's son? The court wit hit upon one which exactly met the contingency; and when the deputation returned to London, their report was, "that they had found the lady seated in state, surrounded by her javelin men, in a spacious palace, and eating her repast from a table of such great value, that she would not take hundreds of pounds for it!"

In the next reign, that of Henry VI., we find that monarch opening a commission, in 1454, for procuring minstrels for

his service, by *force*. A press-gang, as it were, went forth and carried off any likely fellow that suited them, with a good voice, just as the gentleman in the French Opera carries off the "Postillon de Longjumeau." The levy was made *de ministraliis propter solatium Regis providendis*,—for procuring minstrels, even by force, for the solace or entertainment of the King. The commission enjoins that these shall not only be skilled in their art, as minstrels, but also handsome and elegantly shaped. A reference to the matter will be found in the fourth volume of Warton's 'History of English Poetry;' the author of which, perplexed with the different meanings attached to the word *minstrel*, would have been inclined to have taken the persons here designated, as singers only, or singers for the Royal Chapel exclusively, but for the directions as to their good looks and comely shapes. These directions seem to him to point to jesters, "tumblers or posture-masters." It is certain that about a century later, in the reign of Edward VI., it was lawful, when the Chapel Royal lacked young choristers, to carry off duly qualified children from their homes, wherever they might be found.

There is proof that the household jester, as well as minstrel —the two characters often under one hood—was a very common and a liberally-patronized professor of his respective arts, in the days of Henry VI. Warton, in his first volume, cites the Prior's accounts of Maxtoke, in Warwickshire (to which I have before alluded), under one of its general heads, "De Joculatoribus et Mimis." Under this head, and having reference only to various years in the reign of Henry VI., we find several sums expended by the brotherhood for itinerant entertainers who have different names, but whose shades of professional difference it is not so easy to determine. Thus we find, "To a *joculator*, in the Michaelmas week, the sum of fourpence." Again, "At Christmas, to a *cithariste* and other joculators, 4*d*." The following entries are further illustrations:—"To the mimes of Solihull, 6*d*." "To the

mimes of Coventry, 20*d.*" "To Lord Ferrers' mimes, 6*d.*" "To the *lusores* from Eton, 8*d.*" "Ditto, from Coventry, 8*d.*" "To those from Daventry, 12*d.*" "To the mimes from Coventry, 12*d.*" "To Lord Astley's mimes, 12*d.*" "To four of Lord Warwick's mimes, 10*d.*" "To a blind mime, 2*d.*" "To six mimes of the household of Lord Clinton." . . . "To two mimes from Rugby, 10*d.*" "To a certain citharistę, 6*d.*" "To another from Coventry, 6*d.*" "To two others from Coventry, 8*d.*" "To the mimes of Rugby, 8*d.*" "To Lord Buckridge's mimes, 20*d.*" "To the mimes of Lord Stafford, 2*s.*" "To the lusores from Coleshill, 8*d.*" "It is here to be observed," says Warton, "that the minstrels," or jesters, "of the nobility, in whose families they were constantly retained, travelled about the country to the neighbouring monasteries; and that they generally received better gratuities for these occcasional performances, than the others."

After the death of Henry VI., there appears on the stage a court jester who is said to have made half England merry with his jests. I allude to the famous Scogan (or Scoggin, or Scogin), who was attached to the household of Edward IV., and whose name is not forgotten in these later days.

Oriel College, Oxford, counted about a century and a half from the time of its foundation, in the reign of Edward II. (1326), when, if credit may be attached to the story told by merry Andrew Borde, of Pevensey, Scogan became a student in that college. The young student is said to have been of a good family; and tradition, to be more or less trusted as the reader pleaseth, has preserved a few incidents of his life there, and in other localities. We have a hint of his roystering career in the little incident of Falstaff in his salad days, who "broke Scogan's head at the court gate." Ben Jonson alludes to him, in the Masque of 'The Fortunate Isles,' as—

"A fine gentleman, and a Master of Arts,
Of *Henry the Fourth's time*, who made disguises

> For the King's sons, and writ in ballad royal
> Daintily well. . . . .
> In rhyme, fine tinkling rhyme, and flowing verse,
> With now and then some sense; and he was paid for 't,
> Regarded and rewarded, which few poets
> Are, nowadays."

The specimens we have of Scogan's poetry do not warrant the praise above given; and we know, from some of his rhymes, that he held the University graduates in very absolute contempt. What he said of the M.A.'s, is not to be repeated. The substance was, that they were mere dolts, beyond the schools; and Scogan did not rank the B.A.'s much higher, as may be seen in the succeeding couplet, which says,—

> "A B.A. is not worth a straw,
> Except he be among fools."

The joyous Suffolk student—for Scogan, it is believed, came from Bury—became, in time, a very merry and not very scrupulous tutor. Every sage has his maxim, and Scogan's was, that "A merry heart doeth good, like a medicine." With such a lecturer, the pupils must have conferred on Oriel a reputation something resembling that which Merton once derived from its students; of which college an old warden used to say, that there could be little doubt of the learning it possessed, seeing that every pupil brought a little with him, and took none away. But even Oriel, in Scogan's time, had its solemn seasons; and when the plague of 1471 broke out at Oxford, which ultimately caused more devastation in England than the fifteen years of war through which the country had recently passed, Scogan followed the University fugitives who took refuge, and found safety, in the rural hospital of St. Bartholomew.

If the season of trial rendered other men serious, it had no such effect upon Scogan. His irregularities were numerous, and not the least offensive of them was the irreligious

spirit, combined with avarice, which induced him to help an unworthy candidate into the priesthood, for the bribe of a horse, presented to him by the candidate's father. Even Oxford grew at last weary of Scogan's want of decorum; and under compulsion, or following his inclination, the merry Suffolk Punch withdrew from the University, but did not long lack employment. He presented himself to Sir William Neville, a country gentleman, and requested to be engaged by him as his household fool. This negotiation was happily carried out; and some time after, Sir William introduced Scogan to Edward IV. The knight took his jester to court, probably out of vanity; for it was not every household fool that had the wit, talent, and education of this gentleman-joculator. The King was so pleased with his gossip that there was nothing left for the loyal knight, but to offer to make over his joyous retainer to a royal patron. Henceforward, Scogan became the court buffoon of Edward; but, as far as I can judge from the sorry or dirty five dozen of "jests" of which Andrew Borde makes him the hero, he assumed the office of buffoon and dropped that of wit. The choicest story told of him, is that wherein he is described as standing, for a long period, beneath a water-spout, under heavy rain, for a reward, (or for a wager, by which he may not have profited in the same degree,) of twenty pounds,—a large sum in those days, but not too large for the fool who thus risked his life.

It was the characteristic of our English kings, to be liberal to their buffoons,—more liberal, indeed, than they were to more valuable servants,—as I shall more especially show, presently. Edward was so well satisfied with Scogan, that he conferred upon him a town-house in Cheapside, and, still greater mark of the Royal consideration, a country mansion at Bury. At the latter place, he and the princely Abbot were on the most intimate terms, and those of a very joyous complexion:—

"They 'd haunch and ham; they 'd cheek and chine;
They 'd cream and custard, peach and pine.
And they gurgled their throats with right good wine,
Till the Abbot his nose grew red.
No *De Profundis* there they sang,
But a roystering catch to the rafters rang;
And the bell for matins, it went 'ting tang,'
Ere the last of them rolled to bed."

Scogan, it would seem, was married at this period; and it would also appear that his wife was a fine lady in her way, who, among other matters connected with the fine-ladyism of her times, was very desirous of having a page who might precede her, as she went humbly, in state, to church. In fact, she intimated that it would be impossible for her to find her way to church, without a page. "Poor lass!" said the jester, one Saturday night, "you shall have a guide to church, before the bells ring tomorrow morning." Accordingly, on the Sunday morning, Scogan arose early, and chalked the road which lay between his house and the church-door; he either strewed the chalk, or drew lines with it. When church-time came, he led his wife to the threshhold of their dwelling, to see her new page. When the extremely fastidious lady beheld the practical trick played her by her husband, she waxed so wroth that all his wit could hardly pacify her.

Among the practical jokes of this court fool I recognize many that really belong to a much earlier period, and which must have been current as "stories" at the time they are narrated as having been performed by Scogan himself. The following, however, is said to be properly assigned to him. He had borrowed a large sum of money of the King. Some stories say the Queen, and Flögel even names *Queen Elizabeth* as the patroness of this jester! The sum is set down at £500, which is extremely doubtful. Be this as it may, a day for payment had been named; and when that day had arrived, Scogan was not prepared to pay

the debt. After much thought upon the matter, he fell sick and died, and requested his friends to bury him in such a way that the Sovereign should encounter the funeral. They entered into the joke with great alacrity, put on the trappings of mitigated affliction, and in due time carried Scogan forth on a comfortably-arranged bier, when they contrived, as directed, to encounter Edward. When Louis XV. saw the funeral of his old favourite, Madame de Pompadour, he had the bad taste to cut a sorry joke. When Edward met the funeral procession of Scogan, he regretted the loss of his merry follower; and among other kind things to which he gave utterance, remarked, that he freely forgave Scogan and his representatives the sum for which the jester was indebted to him. The buffoon, who had expected this act of release, immediately jumped up, thanked his illustrious creditor, and prudently called all present to bear witness to the Royal act of grace: "It is so revivifying," said Scogan, "that it has called me to life again." If this incident be true, we may also believe, as we are requested to do, that great mirth followed thereupon.

Perhaps Scogan presumed upon the liberties allowed him by the King; for we are told that his pranks at court became so boisterously intolerable, that he was at last exiled, and forbidden to return on English soil, upon pain of death. He went to France, thence came back with his shoes full of the soil of Picardy, and he claimed impunity, on the ground that he was not standing on English land. This sort of story is told of so many jesters, that I leave its acceptance or rejection to the decision of my readers. We come again to facts, when we encounter Scogan dwelling for awhile at Jesus College, Cambridge; and there is, probably, foundation for the story which represents him travelling in Normandy.

In the collection of 'Scogan's Jests,' to which I have before alluded, as being collected by merry Andrew Borde, of Pevensey—that learned and mirthful doctor who Latin-

ized his name into "Perforatus," we are informed,—"How Scogan made the country-people of Normandy offer their money to a dead man's head."

"Upon a time when Scogan lacked maintenance, and had gotten the displeasure of his former acquaintance by reason of his crafty dealing and unhappy tricks, he bethought himself in what manner he might get money with a little labour. So, travelling up into Normandy, he got him a priest's gown, and clothed himself like a scholar, and afterwards went into a certain churchyard, where he found the skull of a dead man's head, the which he took up and made very clean, and after bore it to a goldsmith, and hired him to set it in a stud of silver. Which being done, he departed to a village there by, and came to the parson of the church, and saluted him, and then told him, that he had a relic, and desired him to do so much for him as to show it unto the parish, that they might offer to it; and withal promised the parson that he should have one-half of the offerings. The parson, moved with covetousness, granted his request, and so, upon the Sunday following, told his parishioners thereof, saying, that there was a certain religious scholar come to the town, that had brought with him a precious relic; and that he that would offer thereunto should have a general pardon for all his forepassed sins; and that the scholar was there present himself, to show it to them. With that, Scogan went up into the pulpit, and showed them the relic that he had; and said to them that the head spoke to him, and bade him that he should build a church over it; and that the money that the church should be builded withal should be well-gotten. But when the people came to offer unto it, Scogan said unto them, 'All you women who have been faithless to your husbands, I pray you sit still, and come not to offer, for the head bade me that I should not receive your offerings.' Whereupon, the poor men and their wives came thick and threefold to this offering;

and there was not a woman but she offered liberally, because that he had said so; and he gave them the blessing with the head. And there were some that had no money, that offered their rings; and some of them that offered twice or thrice, because they would be seen. Thus received he the offerings both of the good and the bad, and by this practice got a great sum of money."

That he subsequently came again to England, may be gathered from stories of a later date. One legend tells us of the King condemning him to be hanged, but allowing him the privilege of choosing a tree from which he was to be suspended. Scogan avoided the penalty by being unable to fix on a tree exactly to his mind. The story, however, is related of earlier jesters than Scogan, and seems to have originally belonged to the buffoon of Alboin, King of the Lombards.

There is nothing more left worth telling, though there is much more that might be told, of Scogan, the gentleman-buffoon of Edward IV. His last expressed desire was characteristic of his vocation and his humour:—"Bury me," said he, "under one of the water-spouts of Westminster Abbey; for I have ever loved good drink, all the days of my life." It was a fool's wish; but for the grave of him who made it, no less an author than Cardinal Pole composed in his younger days, an epitaph which may be worthy the jester, but is certainly less worth citing than that composed by Swift for one of the last of our household fools, and which will be found in a subsequent page of this volume.

The stupid book, edited by Borde of Pevensey, and known to many an antiquary whose patience is not stout enough to hold out to the end of the dirt, dullness, and dreariness which mark what is called 'Scoggin's Jests,' reminds me of a saying of Balzac, with reference to two of the wittiest Frenchmen of the great revolutionary era,—Chamfort and Rivarol. "Those good fellows," remarks Balzac, "put a

whole volume into one of their witty sayings; but now-a-days, it is difficult to find one witty saying in a whole volume." The last part of this remark is most applicable to collections of jests to which the name of some court-fool was appended in order to give them currency and an air of authenticity. Even if Scogan's so-called "Jests" were authentic, they would not be worth citing. They offend in every possible way, and it is impossible to read them and believe them to be genuine, without feeling surprise at an Oxford student becoming such a buffoon, and at such a buffoon as their hero being so liberally recompensed as he was, by the royal Edward.

Let us pass, then, from Scogan and from a King who, with all his patronage of the fool, could least of all the Kings of England bear a political joke, to one who had scant time to listen to jesting. But I will here remind the reader that out of Edward IV.'s barbarity, in executing a merry tradesman in Cheapside, merely for saying that he would make his son heir to the *Crown*,—meaning his house of business, distinguished by that sign,—Fuller, in his 'Holy State,' draws an argument against profane jesting which might have profited all, court fools as well as others, could they only have heard the arguer. Fuller upheld harmless mirth as a cordial for restoring wasted spirits; and he only pronounced jesting unlawful when it trespassed in quantity, quality, or season. When speaking against jesting with God's word, he asks, "Will nothing please thee to wash thy hands in, but the font? or to drink healths in, but the church chalice?" With earthly monarchs, fools may have their privilege; but then Fuller remembers the poor mercer's joke which so angered Edward IV., and he exclaims, "More dangerous still is it to wit-wanton it with the majesty of God." Finally, he gives these rules against profane jesting,—rules which, when he wrote, while fools were yet in remembrance, if not in favour at court, he knew had been daily transgressed. "If," he

says, "without thy will, and by chance-medley, thou hittest Scripture in ordinary discourse, yet fly to the city of refuge, and pray God to forgive thee. Scoff not at the natural defects of any which are not in their power to mend. Oh! 't is cruel to beat a cripple with his own crutches. Neither scorn any for his profession, if honest, though poor and painful. He that relates another man's wicked jest, adopts it for his own. He that will lose his friend for a jest, deserveth to die a beggar by the bargain. We read that all those who were born in England the year after the beginning of the great mortality, in 1349, wanted their four cheek-teeth. Such let thy jests be," adds the humorous commentator, "that they may not grind the credit of thy friend; and make not jests so long till thou becomest one." Such was the comment of a moralist on jesting, suggested by the consequence of non-professional joking on royalty.

From the young King Edward V., no jester had opportunity to draw a smile, except at the banquet at Hornsey Park, the only festival which young Edward held between his accession and his death. His uncle Richard lacked leisure to be "i' the vein" for these follies; but his wife, Lady Anne, and the young Princess Elizabeth (afterwards Queen of Henry VII.) kept, for a brief season, such joyous court at Greenwich, such minstreling, and dancing, and witnessing or playing jests, that the oppressed and impoverished people looked on grimly, and murmured rather above their breath. Henry VII., again, was too mean or too wise to lavish money on any mere court gauds, though he was not ungenerous in other respects. He was, at all events, the first English King who lived within his income; and he was better pleased by lending money to fit out the first European expedition that ever reached the American continent than he could have been by any jest, good, bad, or indifferent, that he might have to pay for. Nevertheless, in the days of the Tudors, court fools abounded, and indeed,

till the fall of the monarchy under the Stuarts, the nest of ninnies was filled with a chirruping brood.

Among these was Patch, who is said to have been jester to Henry VIII. By some, this name is supposed to stand for "fool" generally. Others, with better reason, believe that Patch was the cant-name of Williams and Saxton, fools of Cardinal Wolsey. However this may be, we may be sure that a jester alone could have dared to make such a King as Henry VIII. look ridiculous, as a fool called by this name, "Patch," is said to have done when he besought the King to grant him a warrant authorizing him to exact an egg from every husband who had serious reasons to be dissatisfied with the conduct of his wife. The King thought it a fair joke, and the warrant being drawn up in sportiveness, he signed the document in full gaiety of spirit. The ink was scarcely dry when the jester, bowing with mock gravity, demanded the first egg from the King. "Your Grace," said he, "belongs to the class of husbands on whom I am entitled to make levy." The joke was not very well relished, and the warrant was cancelled.

John Heywood, himself a "King's Jester" and a poet, has made Cardinal Wolsey's fool the subject of an epigram, which serves, with its title, to show both the real and the nick-name of the merry retainer. The former, according to Heywood, was Sexton and not *Saxton*. The epigram is entitled, 'A Saying of Patch, my Lord Cardinal's Fool,' and runs thus:—

> Master Sexton, a person of unknowen wit,
> As he at my Lord Cardinal's board did sit,
> Greedily caught at a goblet of wine.
> "Drink none!" said my lord, "for that sore leg of thine."
> "I warrant, your Grace," quoth Sexton, "I provide
> "For my leg; for I drinke on the tother side."

That Patch was the name of a fool retained by the Cardinal, we have further evidence in the touching biography of

Wolsey by Cavendish, his "gentleman-usher." And that Patch had merit of a superior quality, may also be seen in the same little work. When the fallen statesman was proceeding up the hill near Putney, on his way to Esher, having been just before compelled to retire from York House, he was overtaken by Norris, a gentleman of the Royal bed-chamber, who brought with him a gold ring and a letter from the King, with assurances of his own that the Cardinal would soon recover both favour and power. Wolsey, in sudden ecstasy, slipped from his mule; went on his knees in the mud; poured forth very unheroic phrases, ringing of gratitude, but the key-note of which was struck by self-gratulation. The Cardinal was for giving anything he possessed to the bearer of such good news; but then he had so little left to bestow! At length, he rewarded Norris with a gold chain, to the end of which was attached a relic of the True Cross, "which," said Wolsey, "when I was in prosperity, I would not have parted with for a thousand pounds." Norris having been thus rewarded, the downfallen but hopeful dignitary looked around for a fitting messenger to convey the expressions of his thankfulness to Henry,—"To that good master whom I have loved more than myself, and whom I have well served. And to say that I have no one now to convey to him the expression of my gratitude!" At this moment, his eye fell upon poor faithful Motley, and the Cardinal immediately exclaimed, "But Patch, my fool, who is with me, will be my interpreter to his Majesty, with you, my good Norris. I give him to his Majesty: Patch is *worth a thousand pounds.*"

The jester, who was thus set at as high a value as a relic of the True Cross, had no inclination at all to become a *court* fool. Cavendish describes the unwillingness of Patch in an almost pathetic manner. The jester refused to leave his old master, but six stout men bound him to a horse, not without great difficulty, according to Mr. Tytler; but

having accomplished the task, the steed was set off at full gallop, and Patch was thus promoted to a court jestership, in spite of himself.

Patch seems to have been bold enough, when he got used to his new service, if the anecdote I have told of him and the King be well founded; but the best known of the jesters who fooled courtiers to the very top of their bent, at the court of Henry VIII., and did not spare the King himself, was Will Sommers, whose alleged portrait at Hampton Court is familiar to all who have resorted to that most pleasant locality. Armin, in his 'Nest of Ninnies,' has given another portraiture of Will,—one that may be relied on, for Armin gave it when many persons were alive, well able to judge of its correctness; and this portrait I proceed to place before my readers.

"Will Sommers, born in Shropshire, as some say,
Was brought to Greenwich, on a holiday,—
Presented to the King;—which fool disdain'd
To shake him by the hand, or was ashamed.
Howe'er it was; as ancient people say,
With much ado was won to it that day.
Lean he was, hollow-eyed, as all report,
And stoop he did too; yet in all the court,
Few men were more beloved than was this fool,
Whose merry prate kept with the King much rule.
When he was sad the King with him would rhyme;
Thus Will exilëd sadness many a time.
I could describe him, as I did the rest,
But in my mind, I do not think it best;
My reason this, howe'er I do descry him,
So many knew him, that I may belie him;
Therefore, to please all people, one by one,
I hold it best to let that pains alone;
Only this much:—He was a poor man's friend,
And help'd the widow often in her end.
The King would ever grant what he did crave,
For well he knew Will no exacting knave;
But wish'd the King to do good deeds great store,
Which caused the court to love him more and more."

Will seems to have been contemporary with Saxton, or Sexton, a fool of some notoriety at the Tudor's Court, from the circumstance of his being the first jester who wore a wig. There is an entry from the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chambers, quoted in the Archæologia, to the following effect:—"Paid for Saxton, the King's fool, for a wig, 20*s*." Is it not possible that this jester may have assumed this mode in order to ridicule the new fashion of the ladies, who had now, for the first time in England, adopted the wig —which English lords had begun to wear as early as the reign of Stephen? However this may be, the above is all we know of Saxton in his capacity of fool to Henry. How Sommers looked at Court, the following entry will sufficiently show:—"For making a doublet of worsted, lined with canvass and cotton, for William Som'ers, our fool. Item, for making of a coat and a cap of green cloth, fringed with red crape and lined with frieze, for our said fool. Item, for making of a doublet of fustian, lined with cotton and canvass, for our said fool. For making of a coat of green cloth, with hood to the same, fringed with white and lined with frieze and buckram, for our fool aforesaid."

In this suit and office, Will's reputation so stirred Shropshire, that his old uncle trudged up to town to visit him at court. The uncle was no ill man to look at, for when the "kinde old man," as Armin calls him, entered Greenwich, and on asking the way to the palace, was laughed at by saucy pages, who directed him across the water to Blackwall, others pitied his simplicity, and had respect for a man "with a buttoned cap, a lockram falling band (coarse but clean), a russet coat, a white belt of a horse-hide (right horse-collar, white leather), a close round breech of russet sheep's-wool, with a long stock of white kersey, a high shoe with yellow buckles, all white with dust,—for that day, the good old man had come three-and-twenty miles on foot." Lusty old yeoman! How much more respectable than the flaunting

"gard and gentlewomen in their windows," who "had much sport" to see him pass on his way. But the old man thought his nephew as good as any of them, and, with dignified self-possession, inquires,—"if there be not a gentleman in the court dwelling, called by the name of Master Will Sommers." This was giving Will a high position, but it was recognized; and the old uncle was led to Will, who was taking an afternoon sleep in the park, with his head on a cushion supplied by a woman whose son, addicted to the gentle pursuit of piracy, Will saved from the hangman and the gallows at Blackwall. After a little fooling and much hearty greeting, Will took his uncle by the hand: "Come," says he, "thou shalt see Harry, Cockle,—the only Harry in England;" so he led him to the chamber of presence, and ever and anon cries out, "Awere! room for me and my uncle! and, knaves, bid him welcome!" This was done, perhaps, with a little mock gravity, but Armin tells us that "the old man thought himself no earthly man, they honoured him so much."

Will, however, paused awhile, for he saw his uncle's country suit, pronounced it unfit for the King's presence, and, telling the old man that he must first don a full court-dress, Will takes him to his chamber, and attires him in his best fool's suit, cap and all. The simple old man simply wore the costume, and when the two stood before the King, Harry laughed at the ridiculous spectacle. The old man, and Will too, seem to have had some purpose in the whole affair, for when the King encouraged them to talk, the uncle bade Will tell him all about Tirrell's Frith,—a common, of the use of which the Shropshire poor had been deprived by Master Tirrell, who had enclosed it. The King was so interested that he gave orders that the common should be thrown open again; and thereby the sturdy old uncle had not his long walk for nothing, seeing also that, when he returned to his native county, "he, while he lived, for that

deed was allowed bayly of the common, which place was worth twenty pound a year."

Of Will's power to please the King in his moody moments, we have specimens in certain questions put, and indeed answered, by the fool. He put them, as the fool of the play does, "with an anticke look, to please the beholders;" for example, "What is it, that the lesser it is, the more it is to be feared?"—which proves to be, "a little bridge over a deep river," at which the King "*smiled.*" At more foolish riddles, the King "*laught;*" and at others, which cannot possibly be set down here, we are told that "the King laught *heartily, and was exceeding merry.*" For being made so merry, Harry promised Will any favour he might ask; Will undertook to apply when he had grace to petition. "One day I *shall,*" said he, "for every man sees his latter end, but knows not his beginning." And with this jester's quip, Will took his leave and went away, "and laid him down among the spaniels to sleep."

Will was but scantily in favour with Cardinal Wolsey, whom he once mulcted of ten pounds. He had entered the King's private apartment when the Sovereign and the Cardinal were together; and Will apologized for the intrusion by saying, that some of his Eminence's creditors were at the door, and wanted to be paid their due. Wolsey declared he would forfeit his head if he owed a man a penny; but he gave Will ten pounds, on his promise to pay it where it was due. When Will returned, he exclaimed, "To whom dost thou owe thy soul, Cardinal?" "To God," was the reply. "And thy wealth?" "To the poor." At which, Will declared the Cardinal's head forfeit to the King. "For," said he, "to the poor at the gate I paid the debt, which he yields is due." The King laughed, and the Cardinal feigned to be merry, "but it grieved him to give away ten pounds so; yet worse tricks than this Will Sommers served him after, for indeed he (the Cardinal) could never abide him."

Will was not above human infirmities; he was jealous, like greater men at court, and especially when a rival fool vied with him to gain smiles and moidores from the King. We have an instance in the case when "a jester, a big man, of a great voice, long black locks, and a very big round beard," was juggling and jesting before the King. Armin tells us, that "lightly one fool cannot endure the sight of another;" and Will, angry at his huge rival, sought to recover his supremacy by dashing a bowl of bread and milk over the head, eyes, and beard of his titanic rival. "This lusty jester, forgetting himself in fury, draws his dagger, and begins to protest. 'Nay,' says the King, 'are ye so hot?' claps him fast; and though he draws his dagger here, makes him put it up in another place. The poor abused jester was jested out of countenance, and lay in durance a great while, till Will Sommers was fain (after he broke his head, to give him a plaister,) to get him out again. But never after came my juggler in the Court more so near the King, being such a man to draw in the presence of the King;" who (after all) could not have been mortally stricken, seeing that jesters carried only daggers of lath; but probably the act itself was considered a bad example and a serious offence.

Of the generous feeling of Will, there is a well-known instance recited in Grainger; according to which it would appear, that in early life Will had been a servant in the family of a Northamptonshire gentleman named Richard Farmor or Fermor. This gentleman was of a compassionate spirit, and hearing of a destitute priest incarcerated in the gaol at Buckingham for denying the King's supremacy, the kind gentleman sent him a couple of shirts and eightpence. This small but acceptable and praiseworthy charity entirely ruined the donor. It laid him open to a charge of *præmunire;* and for giving a change of linen and the price of a meal to a captive Papist, the King confiscated this Fermor's estates, and reduced him to beggary and starvation. Will found opportunity to serve his old master, but not till

death was pressing hard upon the King, and making his heart also something less tough and obdurate than it was wont to be. The fool improved his opportunity, and leaving to others to bid the sick monarch repent of his sins, hinted that it would be a better joke if he were to make reparation for them. The fool's divinity was not so contemptible, for it worked on the dying King, "who," says Mr. Thoms, in a note to Mr. Collier's reprint of the 'Nest of Ninnies,' "caused the remains of Fermor's estate, which had been dismembered, to be restored to him."

The tracts and plays of succeeding years found purchasers or spectators because they reproduced Sommers in his jests, gait, dress, and manners. Rowland has him in his 'Good and Bad News;' Rowley, in his chronicle play, 'When you see me you know me;' and Nash, in his 'Summers' Last Will and Testament.' From these sources, no indifferent idea may be gained of the once famous Will. The incidents of Rowland's poem are to be found in Rowley's play. The latter, printed in 1605, is a chronicle play, including the years 1537–1546, the last year being the one before Henry's death. It abounds with anachronisms, but also with illustrations of the manner in which Sommers lived at court, how he joked with the King, capped rhymes with their Majesties, and was sometimes anything but decent in his jokes. At his first appearance, Will enters the presence "at Whitehall," booted and spurred, upon which the following dialogue takes place:—

"*K.* Why, where hast thou been?

W. Marry, I rise early, and ride post to London, to know what news was here at Court.

K. Was that your nearest way, William?

W. Oh, ay, the very foot-path, but yet I rid the horse-way to hear it. I warrant there is ne'er a Cundid-head keeper in London, but knows what is done in all the courts in Christendom.

Wols. And what is the best news there, William?

W. Good news for you, my Lord Cardinal, for one of the old women water-bearers told me for certain, that last Friday, all the bells in Rome rang backward; there was a thousand dirges sung; six hundred Ave-Marias said; every man washed his face in holy water; the people crossing and blessing themselves to send them a new Pope, for the old is gone to purgatory. . . . The news," adds Will, "after leaving Rome last Friday, was at Billingsgate by Saturday morning; 'twas a full moon, and came up in a spring-tide."

Queen Jane is represented as looking "bigger" upon the jester; "But I care not," says Will to the King, "an she bring thee a young prince, Will Sommers mayhaps be his fool when you two are both dead and rotten. "Do you hear, wenches?" he subsequently says to the maids of honour, likely to be anxious to announce the issue of the event alluded to. "She that brings the first tidings, however it fall out, let her be sure to say that the child's like the father, or else she shall have no reward."

Will is described as extravagantly free, not only to the maids of honour, but to the King's sister. Patch, in this piece, is not the King's fool, but Wolsey's. "All the fools follow you, my lord," he says to the Cardinal, when the latter observes the two fools near him: "I come to bid my cousin Patch welcome to court; and when I come to York House, he'll do as much for me." To which Patch, who seems here a natural rather then an artificial fool, replies, "Yes, cousin; hey, da, darry, diddel, day, day." Will's attempts to make the King merry are sometimes roughly recompensed. "He gave me such a box on the ear," says the fool, "that strake me clean through three chambers, down four pair of stairs. I fell over five barrels in the bottom of the cellar, and if I had not well liquored myself there, I had never lived after it." Patch, too, declares that the King had

almost killed him "*with his countenance.*" This sort of fool's flattery has been very acceptable, it may be observed, to all despotic princes, from Augustus down to the Czar Nicholas. The most amusing of Roman historians tells us that Augustus was always well pleased with those persons who, in addressing him, looked upon the ground, as though there were a divine splendour in his eyes, too dazzling for them to gaze upon. "Gaudiebatque," says Suetonius, "si quis sibi acrius contuenti, quasi ad fulgorem solis, vultum submitteret." His eyes nevertheless grew dim as he grew old, when the lustre of the left one, in particular, went out in a most ungodlike fashion.

The Czar Nicholas had a similar weakness, and he used his eyes to frighten or fascinate people. Playing them mildly, he subdued Lieutenant Royer into ecstatic admiration; and, according to Mr. Turnerelli, Nicholas once, with one of his terrible glances, terrified a Swedish Admiral into the Russian service. On another occasion, happening to encounter a poor fellow who had strolled into a private part of the Imperial park, the Czar gazed at him with such lightning in his glance, that the intruder was stricken with brain fever;—an amount of flattery which even Patch never piled up as tribute to the withering power of the terrible looks of Henry VIII. Patch indeed had cause to be afraid of Henry, for his rude essay to make the melancholy Monarch merry, is rewarded by a kicking; for which, however, the King makes compensation. Patch gets an angel, to buy him points; but Will, who contrived that his cousin fool should incur the punishment, obtains a new cap and suit for his pains; for, saveth he, "so long as the King lives, the Cardinal's fool must give way to the King's fool." But in the latter there is some sound sense, as, for instance, when he exclaims: "Dost hear, old Harry, I am sure the true faith is able to defend itself, without thee!" For some such remark, Wolsey styles him "a shrewd fool." Will is ready to do anything but flatter,

which is against his vocation; and get drunk, which is against his health; but he no sooner declines to follow Patch to the cellar, when he foregoes his resolution, and foolishly drinks away his wit, but sleeps it back again.

Its awakening is first tried on the new Queen Catherine; and it is in the accomplished jester's vein. "Look to thy husband, Kate, lest he cozen thee; provide civil oranges enough, or he'll have a lemon, shortly." This play upon the word *leman*, or "mistress," was subsequently employed by Heywood, the "King's Jester," to point a jest made in the hearing of Queen Mary. Will, however, is much more addicted to uttering bitter sentences against Wolsey, than jokes on the King, Queen, or little Prince Edward. He is especially severe on the "Smoake pence," a most unpopular tax levied by the priest, and turned, as Will implies, to the Cardinal's especial profit. The jester proposes to the King, that Wolsey shall be permitted to take the chimneys, since there were bricks enough in the land, or materials for them, to build others. But he protests against the coin of the realm being carried away, seeing, as he says, that there is no mint whence new money can be issued. Indeed nothing can exceed the boldness of Will's jokes against the Cardinal, except the nastiness of those levelled at the ladies. Both are doubtless traditional, and we may believe that they were uttered with impunity, from the stereotyped speech of the King, "Well, William, your tongue is privileged."

Sommers was also brought upon the stage by Nash, in his 'Summers' Last Will and Testament.' This piece was written in 1593, and printed some years later. There were then persons living who may have remembered Will, as having seen him in their youth; and what is said of him personally in this piece, may be accepted, I think, as having some foundation in fact. The incidents spoken of connected with his life at court, may also rest upon a basis

of truth, and are therefore worth noticing. Nash's play is more like a masque than a comedy, and Rowley's chronicle-drama abounds in anachronisms. The probable facts, however, are only mistimed, and both dramatists agree, in the main, in the character of Will, "who," says Mr. Thoms, in the reprint of the 'Nest of Ninnies,' "in all probability owes his reputation rather to the uniform kindness with which he used his influence over bluff Harry, than to his wit or folly."

In the dramatic portrait, then, of this once famous court fool, as limned by Nash, we find Will describing himself as "used to go without money, without garters, without girdle, without a hatband, without points to my hose, and without a knife to my dinner." As in Rowley, so here, Will quotes Latin; he is also apt at old proverbs, and verbose with old classical stories and tales, in which there are more words, however, than wit. His Latin, indeed, is not always to the point, for he translates *memento mori*, "Remember to rise betimes in the morning;" nor are his classical stories true to historical tradition, nor his tales remarkable for delicacy of illustration. He has a simpleton's philosophy, and talks little matters of science very much after the fashion of 'Conversations at Home.' He has, too, a fool's contempt for learning, as may be seen in the following passage, which contains some allusions to his early life:—

"Who would be a scholar? not I, I promise you! My mind always gave me this learning was such a filthy thing, which made me hate it so as I did. When I should have been at school construing *Batte mi fili, mi fili mi Batte*, I was close under a hedge, or under a barn wall, playing at span-counter or Jack-in-a-box. My master beat me, my father beat me, my mother gave me bread and butter, yet all this would not make me a squitter-book. It was my destiny. I thank her as a most courteous goddess, that she hath not cast me away upon gibberish;" and so on, with a diatribe

against the divisions of grammar, and parts of speech generally, as forming a portion of "the devil's Pater-noster." And yet, out of the accidence, he coins almost his only fragment of wit throughout a play in which he enacts the character of "Chorus." "Verba dandi et reddendi," says Will, "go together in the grammar rule; there is no giving but with condition of restoring." Altogether we obtain fewer ideas of what Will may have been, from Nash, than from Rowley. The former makes him less attractive, and when the jester closes the piece with a "*Valete spectatores*, pay for this sport with a *Plaudite*, and the next time the wind blows from this corner, we will make you ten times as merry,"—we are glad to rejoin, *vale et tu*, and to get away without paying the price asked for sport which, had it been ten times as merry as is vouched for the next play, would not have sinned with excess of mirthfulness.

It only remains for me to add, that Will survived to hold office under Edward VI. How he sustained his reputation during a portion of the six years' reign of that young monarch, I am unable to inform my readers. The only trace I have found of him is in a paper by Bray, in the eighteenth volume of the 'Archæologia,' from which we learn, according to a citation from the household expenses, that the sum of twelvepence was paid "for painting Will Somers' garments."

Before proceeding to the next reign, I will take this opportunity to narrate an anecdote of the learned and skilful diplomatist, Pace,—not because he was the namesake of Pace, the "bitter fool" of Queen Elizabeth's days, but because the anecdote itself has reference to subjects from which Henry could draw amusement, and that there is an illustration in it, in connection with the court jesters.

Pace, we are told, in the collection of letters to and from Erasmus (Basle, 1558), was once in the church at Woodstock, with the King and court, when the Franciscan monk

who preached, confined himself in his sermon to denouncing the Greek language, and devoting to destruction all who studied it. The choice of such a subject, and the manner in which it was treated, were the more remarkable, as, a short time previously, a Franciscan monk had been silenced for preaching in the same sense. The Oxford students had hooted him in his cell, and the authorities had to interfere. The King had written to the heads of colleges in favour of the study of Greek; and his amazement was all the more unbounded at the audacity of the new monk, who went even further in his wrath against Greek than the Jewish Rabbis, who were wont to solemnly pronounce accursed the man who allowed his children to learn that language. If the King was enraged, the grave and learned Pace, who sat near him, was delighted. He did not dare exhibit his ecstasy; but he was so overcome with a propensity to burst out laughing, that he was compelled to bury his face in both hands, to conceal his strong and risible emotion. He was rather bolder when Henry subsequently ordered the monk to attend him in his closet, where the king pelted him with questions and menaces, and nearly frightened him out of his senses. The poor preacher had been abusing Erasmus without having read his works. He had, however, as he tremblingly remarked, "cast his eye over some pages of the 'Eulogy of Folly.'" "Ah," said Pace, "I really believe that the work was especially written with a view to your reverence." The monk meekly smiled. He had not heart enough to confront the scholar, but he had sense enough to creep out of the difficulty into which he had fallen. He confessed himself to be reconciled with Greek from the sudden conviction which had descended upon him, that it was derived from the Hebrew. King and courtiers present burst into loud laughter at this sapient observation, under shelter of which the speaker was allowed to withdraw in safety. Pace declared that the monk had wit enough to

make the fortune of a court jester; for if it did not save him from getting into a scrape, it certainly was strong enough to draw him out of one.

Having mentioned the faithful fool of Cardinal Wolsey,—Patch,—I cannot pass over the simpleton, or Morio, Patteson, retained in the household of Wolsey's successor in the Chancellorship, Sir Thomas More. All persons who are familiar with the biography of the latter eminent individual, will remember how heartily Sir Thomas, from his youth upwards, was addicted to jesting. When he was a page, being then fifteen years of age, in the family of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, he kept the octogenarian prelate and all his guests in roars of laughter, as he waited on them at table. Morton was delighted with the frolicsome boy, who, especially at Christmas and other joyous seasons, was worth any number of ordinary household fools, seeing that his improvised jests were superior to anything done or uttered by the professional joker. More's manner on these occasions was, however, quite after the fashion of "cousin Motley." Thus, when the players were representing some comic drama, for the entertainment of their reverend patron, "young More," as Roper relates in his Life, "would suddenly step up among the players, and, never studying before upon the matter, make often a part of his own invention which was so witty, and so full of jests, that he alone made more sport than all the players besides; for which, his towardliness, the Cardinal much delighted in him, and would often say of him to divers of the nobility who at sundry times dined with him, 'This child here, waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous rare man.'" As More, in his youth, gratified Cardinal Morton by his wit, so, in his manhood, by his wit as well as his wisdom, he afforded amusement to his capricious Sovereign. When Henry had had enough of the outpouring of knowledge from More (who was yet but Under-Sheriff of

London *and* Master of the Requests) on astronomy, geometry, and divinity; then, "because," says his biographer, "he was of a very pleasant disposition, it pleased His Majesty and the Queen, after the Council had supped, commonly to call for him to hear his pleasant jests." These latter must have been of a very different quality from those which the King had been wont to make merry with from the lips of Will Sommers, and we cannot be surprised at their exciting such admiration in the Sovereign that he detained the illustrious jester whole weeks at Court, away from his home and domestic enjoyments. Sir Thomas beheld himself in great peril of descending to the vocation of joker in ordinary, and he devised a witty remedy in order to escape the uncoveted distinction. "When Sir Thomas perceived his pleasant conceits so much to delight them that he could scarce once in a month get leave to go home to his wife and children, and that he could not be two days absent from the Court, but he must be sent for again; he, much misliking this restraint of his liberty, began therefore to dissemble his mirth, and so, little by little, to disuse himself, that he from henceforth, in such seasons, was no more so ordinarily sent for." In short, he feigned heaviness of humour, that he might escape the honours paid to, and the services expected from, a court jester. Had any friend expressed astonishment at the change in his bearing, More might have excused himself nearly in the words of the essayist, who said:—"If my readers should at any time remark that I am particularly dull, they may be assured there is a design under it."

So More contrived for awhile to be more at home, where he had a wife who missed all the points of his puns, and a household fool who had about as much wit as his mistress. The latter was one Patteson, an ex-mummer, half crazed by a fall from a church-steeple, who had lost his old itinerant vocation, and whom More took into his family, poor, shabby,

droll fellow as he was, and amused himself, after application to high subjects, by listening to his small wit, even as a man may take now and then to small-beer after too hot and long an acquaintance with ruddy Vin de Beaune.

Patteson founded his desire to be a household fool, on the very sufficient ground that, as he was already laughed at for one, he thought he might as well be hired in a great family, where he should be paid, fed, and lodged for being thus the object of risibility. Sir Thomas answered, that he had had little thought of employing such a retainer, being rather inclined to do all the fooling in his family, himself. The great negotiation, however, was brought to a conclusion by a compromise; the business was to be divided, Sir Thomas continuing unlicensed joker, and Patteson being paid full salary for inoffensive small wit, cleanliness of life, and restraint of his tongue before ladies.

Patteson was not an educated jester, like Scogan and other great wearers of the cap and bells under the roofs of kings. He could not read. "But what of that?" he is said to have asked; "there never was but one that I ever heard of, that never having learned, knew his letters, and well *he* might, for he made them that made them." The witty remark deserved to procure for Patteson his desired engagement; and this he had no sooner procured, than he affected to take precedence of his master, in his own house; "for," said he, "you, brother, are but jester to King Harry, whereas *I* am jester to Sir Thomas More; and I leave you to determine which is the greater man of the two."

Patteson occasionally went abroad with his master, probably attending him as his servant, which was often one of the offices of fools. The license of the latter also went abroad with the service of the former, and we are told that once, after he had been many years in More's service, he attended his master, or at all events was present, at a dinner given in Guildhall, when the conversation fell upon More's

refusal to take the oath of supremacy. The conversation of the guests was interrupted by a query of the fool:—"Why, what aileth him," cried Patteson, "that he will not swear? Wherefore should he stick to swear? I have sworn the oath myself."

Lord Campbell quotes another illustration of the license of this jester, from 'Il Moro,' an Italian account of Sir Thomas More, printed at Florence, and dedicated to Cardinal Pole. The incident is supposed to be narrated by the Chancellor himself, and Lord Campbell is of opinion that it does not give us "a very exalted notion of the merriment caused by these simpletons." Perhaps we might more correctly say, that the incident fails to convey a very elevated idea of the wit that raised the merriment. However this may be, here is the *trait* in question:—

"Yesterday, while we were dining, Pattison" (so is the name here spelt) "seeing a guest with a very large nose, said, there was one at table who had been trading to the *Promontory of Noses*. All eyes were turned to the great nose, though we discreetly preserved silence, that the good man might not be abashed. Pattison, perceiving the mistake he had made, tried to set himself right, and said, 'He lies who says the gentleman's nose is large, for, on the faith of a true knight, it is rather a small one.' At this, all being inclined to laugh, I made signs for the fool to be turned out of the room; but Pattison, who boasted that he brought every affair that he commenced to a happy conclusion, resisted, and, placing himself in my seat at the head of the table, said aloud, with my tone and gesture, 'There is one thing I would have you to know,—that gentleman there has not the least bit of nose on his face.'"

This sort of sparring between patron and jester was commonly indulged in with considerable satisfaction by both parties. It was safer for More to do so, by way of relaxation, with Patteson, than with the King; whose humour might

take a deadly turn against an unwelcome joke, and particularly against an unlicensed joker. The authoress of 'The Household of Sir Thomas More,' following the tradition, describes the banter of Sir Thomas and Sir Witless, as never exceeding the bounds of good-humoured pleasantry; "but Patteson," it is added, "is never without an answer, and although, it may be, each amuses himself now and then with thinking, I'll put him up with such a question; yet, once begun, the skein runs off the reel without a knot, and shows the excellent nature of both, so free are they alike from malice and over-license." It is true that the sayings put in the mouth of More's "*Morio*" by the authoress whose words I have just quoted, are for the most part as apocryphal as Borde's compiled jests to which he has prefixed the name of "Scoggin," to make them sell. The character of the fool is, however, described according to tradition, in the pleasant addition to the Romance of History, in the work last named. There we see Patteson, with a peacock's feather in his hand, sitting astride on a balustrade, and exchanging sharp question and answer, and lively comment and reflection, on peacocks themselves and their vanity; and on the advantages of not having as many eyes in their heads as they have in their tails, as they are in consequence less vain-glorious, and see not what passes behind their backs. Patteson, according to this authoress, chopped logic with the young daughters of More; touched a little on sentimental matters; could speak feelingly of religion, death, and the equality of the grave; spoke prophetically on political subjects; and jested with them, or rather at them, on their several lovers.

Lord Campbell naturally suggests, that More's fool ought to have been a great proficient at jesting, since he practised under so great a master. However this may be, when the Lord Chancellor had commenced to decline from power and dignity, he provided for the future well-being of his fool as

carefully as he did for that of any greater officer of his household. Wolsey, at *his* fall, sent Patch as an acceptable gift to the King. More made over Patteson to a less exalted sovereign,—the Lord Mayor of the City of London, "with a stipulation," says Lord Campbell, "that he should continue to serve the office of fool to the Lord Mayor for the time being." This rather loosely-worded phrase probably points at the origin of the office of "Lord Mayor's Fool," a title which was, however, given to the clubmen in provincial mayoral processions from the year 1444. Whether Patteson was, or was not, the original Lord Mayor's Fool, by right of nomination to the office, he had as little respect for the dignity of chief magistrate of the city, as any modern merchant prince who, being too lazy or too unpatriotic to perform the onerous duty of the office, affects to despise the dignity which accompanies, and the titles which often follow, a distinguished fulfilment of that duty. So this first official corporation jester flouted his sublime chief. His humour in this respect is well hinted at by the authoress of 'The Household of Sir Thomas More,' who depicts Patteson as saying, on one first of April, "I told my Lord Mayor overnight, that if he looked for a fool this morning, he must look in the glass. . . . I should by rights wear the gold chain, and he the motley; and a proper fool he is, and I shall be glad when his year's service to me is out. The worst of these Lord Mayors is, that we can't part with them till their time 's up. Why, now, this present one hath not so much understanding as would foot an old stocking; 't was but yesterday when, in quality of my Taster, he civilly enough makes over to me a half-eaten plate of gurnet, which I wave aside thus, saying,—I eat no fish of which I cannot affirm, '*rari sunt boni*,' few are the bones, . . . and I protest to you, he knew it not for fool's Latin." Patteson himself had a veneration for his old master which he could not entertain for the new, from whose chattering propensity at table, the

jester picked out views of politics that foreboded evil to his former and now disgraced patron. "For the love of safety, then, Mistress Meg," says Patteson, in a passage founded on this stray scrap of history, "bid thy good father e'en take a fool's advice, and eat humble-pie betimes; for doubt not this proud madame (Anne Boleyn) to be as vindictive as Herodias, and one that, unless he appease her full early, will have his head set before her in a charger. I've said my say."

We may take Patteson at his last word, and, leaving him, proceed to greater names than his on the register of Motley in the service of kings.

We now come to a personage of some celebrity, who seems to have been a court jester, without being exactly a court fool. I allude to John Heywood, of North Mimms, in Hertfordshire, whom Sir Thomas More introduced to the King as Sir William Neville did Scogan, and whose introduction was followed by similar circumstances,—his appointment as "jester" to the sovereign.

More had known Heywood early. The latter was a student at what was then called Broadgate, Oxford, now Pembroke. Heywood's spirit of fun, his humour, and his readiness at repartee made him a favourite with More, who was fond of spending leisure hours with him,—a man of whom it was said that "he had wit at will, and art was all he missed." Heywood, moreover, was a good vocalist, and no mean instrumental player. Previous to his introduction to the King, More presented him to the lady (afterwards Queen) Mary, who found his merriment so irresistible "that it moved even her rigid muscles," says Warton; "and her sullen solemnity was not proof against his songs, his rhymes, and his jests." Mary, however, was more easily moved to mirth than Warton and those whose opinions were followed by him, suspected. Even in her

womanhood, when we are accustomed to think of her as one solemnly severe, she could (albeit moody and melancholy at times) laugh heartily at a mountebank. In 1556, Strype speaks of her as holding a grand military review in Greenwich Park, at which "came a tumbler, and played many pretty feats, the Queen and Cardinal (Pole) looking on; whereat she was observed to laugh heartily." Long ere she had ascended the throne, she had learned to laugh at, with, or through John Heywood. Of the latter, Warton says that "he was beloved and rewarded by Henry VIII. for his buffooneries;" and, indeed, that monarch was so satisfied with the quips of his daughter's favourite, that, as previously stated, he named John "King's Jester." He seems to have been a favourite also in the mansions and at the tables of the nobility; and a specimen of his wit there is offered us by Puttenham.

"The following happened," he says, "on a time, at the Duke of Northumberland's board, where merry John Heywood was allowed to sit at the board's end. The Duke had a very noble and honourable mind to pay his debts well, and when he lacked money, would not stick to sell the greatest part of his plate. So had he done some few days before.

"Heywood being loath to call for his drink as often as he was dry, turned his eyes towards the cupboard, and said, 'I find a great miss of your Grace's standing-cups.' The Duke, thinking that he had spoken it of some knowledge that his plate was lately sold, said somewhat sharply, 'Why, Sir, will not *these* cups serve so good a man as yourself?' Heywood readily replied, 'Yes, if it please your Grace, but I would have one of them stand still at my elbow, full of drink, that I might not be driven to trouble your man so often to call for it.'

"This pleasant and speedy reverse of the former words, helped all the matter again, whereby the Duke became

very pleasant, and drank a bottle of wine to Heywood, and bade a cup should always be standing by him."

His boldness with the Queen was quite that of the privileged jester, and he was recompensed for his puns and conceits when men more meritorious were neglected. The following contains good proof of his license. When the Queen once remarked to him that the priests must forego their wives, John exclaimed (and he was a very strict Catholic too), "Then your Grace must allow them *lemmans* [sweethearts], for the clergy cannot live without *sauce*." This epigrammatic turn was very strong upon him; and indeed many of his epigrams, of which he was the author of hundreds, are said to have been versifications of his own jokes. I have already noticed the audacity of his jests with the sovereign, a further instance of which we have in an incident connected with one of his visits to the palace.

"Now, Master Heywood," said Mary on the occasion in question, "what wind blew you to court?" "There were two," answered audacious John; "one, that I might see your Majesty, and the other, that your Majesty might see me." When he was told that a certain Master of Arts had assumed the ordinary attire of the court fool, "There is no great harm in that," remarked Heywood, "he is merely a wise man in a fool's coat; the evil is, when the fool puts over his motley the wise man's gown."—"How do you like my beer?" asked a host of him, "is it not well hopped?" "So well," said Heywood, "that had it hopped a little further, it would have hopped into water." This reminds me of a far wittier saying by a brighter English wit than Heywood—the late Douglas Jerrold; and which is better worth recording. At an hotel at Hastings, Jerrold was dining with two friends, one of whom, after dinner, ordered among other pleasant things, "a bottle of *old* port." "Waiter," said Douglas, with that twinkle of the eye which was always a promise of wit, "Mind, now; a bottle of your *old* port, not your *elder* port."

Heywood never equalled *that*, though he gave utterance to as many witty thoughts as the wittiest man of his time. Among them was his remark, to a person complaining that the great number of lawyers would spoil the profession. "Not so," exclaimed John; "for the more spaniels, the more game!"

His familiarity with Mary, was doubtless founded on his long service. When she was a mere little girl at Greenwich, Heywood officiated as manager of the troop of child actors who performed in her presence. On one occasion he appears to have received six and eightpence for his pains. Later, he wrote ballads for her, sometimes making herself the subject of them. When her coronation procession passed St. Paul's, *there* was mirthful John, seated beneath a vine; and, as the Queen approached, he arose and delivered an oration. When Mary was ill, he went to her chamber and recited verses or read plays to her; and when she was dying, says Flögel, he stood by her death-bed, and solaced her with music; "Er war auch ein berühmter Musikus, und musste der Königin Maria von England, auf ihrem Todbette, mit seiner Musik aufwarten." This could not have been, however, when her death was very near. Lingard simply says, that "on the morning of her death, Mass was celebrated in her chamber; she was perfectly sensible, and expired a few minutes before the conclusion."

With the reputation of having been "King's Jester," Heywood is also known to us as a poet, a dramatist, and a writer of epigrams. In the first capacity, his most laboured piece is the least successful. I have tried in vain to read through his ninety-eight chapters, in octave stanzas, devoted to the subject of "The Spider and the Fly," in the gaily-bound copy in the British Museum. I quite agree with Harrison's description of it (quoted by Warton), that "neither he himself that made it, neither any one that readeth it, can read unto the meaning thereof." It is far

less amusing than the comic song, with the same title, by the old free-and-easy poet, Tom Hudson.

As a dramatist, Heywood was among the earliest of English writers of comedy. He was not among the best for delicacy, humour, or decency. All these are of the roughest and dirtiest, such as might have been expected from Will Sommers. I must however differ in some degree from Warton, unassailable as his judgments generally are, when he describes Heywood's plays as "altogether void of plot, humour, and character." Yet, I confess, detestable as I hold idleness to be, a man were better occupied in doing nothing than in reading these productions. They hardly repay the curiosity of the student of literature, and even *he* must rise from the perusal sorely in need of civet wherewith to sweeten his imagination.

It is as an epigrammatist that this honorary jester was most celebrated, and continues to be best known to the few who care to cultivate acquaintance with him. Of the epigrams I will select a few specimens. Bearing in mind that they are often the versification of his jests, and that the latter must frequently have had allusion to passing subjects, the following probably points at a then living prince. It is entitled:—

OF AN ILL GOVERNOR CALLED JUDE.

A ruler there was in a country afar,
And of the people a great executioner,
Who by name, I understand, was called Jude.
One gave him an ass, which gift when he had view'd,
He asked the giver, for what intent
He brought him that ass. "For a present
I bring, Master Jude," quoth he, "this ass hither;
To join Master Jude and this ass together,
Which two joined in one, this is brought to pass,
I may bid you good even, Master Jude—ass."
"Maccabee or Iscariot, thou knave?" quoth he;—
"Whom it pleaseth your mastership, him let it be!"

The following, too, is very much after the fashion of the French "*fous à titre d'office*," when they repelled the unwelcome familiarity of certain courtiers.

TWO, ARM-IN-ARM.

One said to another, on taking his arm,
"By license, friend, and take this for no harm."
"No, Sir," (quoth the other,) "I give you full leave
"To hang on my arm, Sir, but not on my sleeve."

Here is a jester's definition of

WIT, WILL, AND WISDOM.

Where will is good, and wit is ill,
There wisdom can no manner skill.
Where wit is good, and will is ill,
There wisdom sitteth silent still.
Where wit and will are both too ill,
There wisdom no way meddle will.
Where wit and will well-ordered be,
There wisdom maketh a trinity.

And the following is not a bad specimen of the ordinary fool's mock sermon put into rhyme, with the title of

CERTAIN FOLLIES.

To cast fair white salt into wise man's meat,
To make them count salt, sugar, when they eat,—
A folly.
To bear a man in hand he itcheth in each part,
When the man feeleth an universal smart,—
A folly.
To speak always well and do always ill,
And tell men those deeds are done of good will,—
A folly.
Thy lusty-limbed horse to lead in thy hand,
When on thy lame limbs thou canst scanty stand,—
A folly.
Of sticks for cage-work to build thy house high,
And cover it with lead, to keep thy house dry,—
A folly!

From a sermon, to those who needed the instruction that ought to be afforded by one, is not going wide apart. Such a person Heywood seems to have met, and to have reproved by a Latin pun which was unintelligible to this

MERRY WOMAN.

There came by chance to a good company,
A lady, a wanton, and eke a merry.
And though ev'ry word of her own show'd her light,
Yet no man's words *that* to her might recite.
She had all the words, which she babbled so fast,
That they being weary, one said, at last,
"Madam, you make my heart light as a 'kix,'
To see you thus full of your *meretrix*."
This trick thus well trick'd out in good Latin phrase,
Brought to this tricker neither muse nor mase.
She nought perceiving was no whit offended,
Nor her light behaviour no whit amended;
But still her tongue was clapping like a patten.
"Well," said the said man, in language of Latin,
"I never told woman any fault before,
Nor never, in Latin, will tell them fault more."

It would be hard to say whether Queen Mary laughed or not, when "John, the King's Jester," either read to her the following epigram, or recounted the story, by way of joke; but it is worth quoting here, though not so much as a specimen of the royal favourite's wit, as another proof that in the old pronunciation of the word *ache*, the latter had the *ch* soft.

OF THE LETTER H.

H is worst among letters in all the cross row,
For if thou find him either in thine elbow,
In thine arm or leg, in any degree,
In thy head or teeth, in thy toe or knee;—
Into what place soever H may pyke him,
Wherever thou find *ache* thou shalt not like him.

Heywood has a few epigrams touching fools. The follow-

ing will show that what Selden said of evil-speaking, in reference to James's court fool, Stone, in courtly prose, had been uttered before him by Mary's court wit in shambling verse.

A FOOL'S TONGUE.

Upon a fool's provocation,
A wise will not talk,
But ev'ry light instigation,
Will make a fool's tongue walk.

And again, on a fool whose foolish wit was called wisdom, Heywood said and sang :—

Wisdom and folly in thee (as men scan)
Is, as it were, a thing by itself; fool,
Among fools, thou art taken a wise man;
And among wise men thou art known a fool.

In the same strain is this quatrain :—

OF EARS AND WITS.

Thin ears and thin wits be dainty;
Thick ears and thick wits be plenty.
Thick ears and thick wits be scant;
Thin ears and thin wits none want.

The following belongs to the satirist :—

OF THE WIFE'S AND HER HUSBAND'S WAIST.

"Where am I least, husband?" Quoth he, "In the waist;
Which cometh of this, thou art vengeable strait-laced."—
"Where am *I* biggest, wife?" "In the waist too," quoth she,
"For all is waste in you, as far as I can see."

Finally, here is a fling at farthingales, for which any modern epigrammatist might do what Pope effected for Donne, smooth the versification, and, in addition, turn the point against crinoline.

"Alas! poor verdingales must lie in the street;
To house them no door in the City's made meet.
Since at our doors they in cannot win,
Send them to Oxford, at Broadgate to get in."

Soon after the death of Queen Mary, in 1558, her orthodox jester, who hated and ridiculed Protestantism as vigorously as any French court fool launched his little quips against the faith of the Huguenots, withdrew from England, and took refuge in the fair Flemish city of Mechlin. It was a likely place of refuge for a lively and "orthodox" voluntary exile. Mechlin, like Troyes in Champagne, was worthy of supplying any Court with fools, for it was the wise men of that city who once tried to put out the moon! It was a jovial place also. Near the gate of St. Catherine, on the Antwerp side, stood the church and monastery of St. Alexis. This monastery contained fifteen hundred nuns, and full as many lady boarders. The good sisters enjoyed the very merriest of privileges. They were not only permitted to receive all sorts of visitors within the monastery, but to return the visit when and wheresoever they pleased. They might, if they chose, live unrestrained in the city; and might either marry or leave it alone, just as their humour prompted. The old and anonymous author of 'Les Païs Bas' (Bruxelles, 1692, p. 123), assures his readers that the old-established custom had never been followed by ill effect; and that the pious and pretty sisters had even employed themselves in respectable and praiseworthy matters, to the edification of the population which had before them so excellent an example.

One would have liked to have had a dozen of epigrams from merry John Heywood, on these lively ladies, who, to quote a proverb of his own, were "As nice as nuns' hens;" but he may have been saddened by the aspect of the city itself, which had not yet recovered from the calamity which had fallen upon it in 1546. In the month of August of that

year (near midnight of the 17th), a flash of lightning pierced the powder magazine, and the explosion levelled a fourth of the city, and blew hundreds of its inhabitants into the air. The ruins long encumbered the place; and it was among the remaining wrecks caused by this catastrophe, and the cheerful nuns of St. Alexis, ever busy and mirthful, that orthodox John Heywood passed the closing years of his life. The Papal favour, which had selected Mechlin as the scene of the jubilee of 1452, had gained for the city the title of "Mechlin the Happy." Heywood could not go to Rome, as King Edmund's joculator did, and as one at least of his own sons did subsequently; but, for religion's sake, he pitched his tabernacle in a city that had been blessed by a Pope, blasted by lightning, and was kept merry by the most vivacious nuns that had ever been heard of, except at Farmoutier. Antony Wood (in his 'Athenæ Oxon.' vol. i. p. 150) sneers at the idea of a member of the ordinarily unprincipled profession of poets, going into voluntary banishment for the sake of religion. Perhaps, as far as regards Heywood's case, Antony was not very much mistaken, if it be true that, when Heywood's last hour arrived, in 1589, he spent it in laughter, jokes, gibes, and fearful jesting with that King Death who was summoning him to his court. Further towards that court we will not follow him; but will rather take leave of him with a glance at the portraiture of the living jester at the courts of Henry VIII. and Queen Mary.

The portrait of Heywood, prefixed to his poem of 'The Spider and the Fly' (edition 1556), has nothing in it of the appearance of the court fool. It represents, at full length, a very respectable, middle-aged, and not particularly good-humoured gentleman, with smooth shaven cheeks and chin. He is attired in a close-fitting coat, reaching to the middle of the thigh, surmounted by a long loose-sleeved cloak; the ends of what appears to be trunk-hose appear just below the kirtle portion of the coat; and up to the hose reach long, tight

stockings, gartered both above and below knee. A flat cap with a protecting fall to keep the back of the head warm, is fixed tight upon that head, which seems as closely shaven as the cheeks and chin; at all events, there is no appearance of hair from beneath it. A dagger, suspended from a girdle, hangs across the thighs in front, and in this girdle John the Jester has passed the thumb of either hand; and he stands resting chiefly on the right leg, the left being slightly bent, and the owner of them having altogether something of the look of a man who would be "jolly" if he could, but who is disgusted at his ill success.

As there is no doubt of Heywood having been named by Mary's father, "King's Jester," we may fairly conclude, assuming this portrait to be a true effigy, that the jester was now a higher personage than the fool. This was not the case in the time of Scogan, who, though a member of the University (as Heywood also was), hired himself out, according to Andrew Borde, as a household fool. We shall also find, in the reign of Elizabeth, that a difference was made between *jester* and *fool;* that is, between a clever individual retained or invited to make good jests, without being always obliged to wear motley, and the ordinary fool who had his wages, his privilege of speech, his whipping occasionally, his cumbersome jokes, his freedom of the pantry, and his bed with the spaniels. Tarleton, for instance, was court jester to Elizabeth; but he was not always a wearer of cap and bells. He was not of such good condition by birth as either Scogan or Heywood; he was, what may often be found now in the same person, a tavern-keeper and a low comedian. But he was also "Gentleman of the Chamber" to the Queen; and by that title, he stood near Elizabeth's chair and wagged his tongue boldly, though not always without rebuke.

It will have been noticed that it was not every King of England who cared to be moved to laughter by the exhibitions of comic minstrels or joculators. Some princes have in-

deed accounted laughter thus raised, as beneath the dignity of men of their rank. Thus Philip, son of the Christian Emperor Philip the Arabian, rebuked his own sire openly, for laughing at the jokes and sports of hired jesters who were doing their best to amuse the sovereign and an august body of spectators. The younger Philip read the elder Philip a severe lecture on his unseemly conduct, which seems to me to have been a greater offence against propriety, than his father's merriment. The son's contemporaries gave him the name of Philip Agelastos; and he has come down to us as Philip the Laughless. Old Puttenham, who wrote when court fools were flourishing, praises this impertinent and overstarched young prince. For, says he (in his 'Arte of English Poesie, p. 244, edit. 1589), "though at all absurdities we may decently laugh, and when they be no absurdities, not decently; yet in laughing is there an undecency in other respects, sometime, than of the matter itself." The old man had in his memory, probably, some incidents of uncomely laughter at unseemly court jests of the days of the Tudors.

The dynasty of jesters was not yet overthrown; but I may observe that there were three things which helped to overthrow that dynasty, and to render the vocation a matter of history. When intense gravity of deportment ceased to be considered as warrant for aristocratic breeding, fashionable people, if I may so speak, did not require mirth to be provided for them; they manufactured a better article for themselves. Again, when reading and writing began to be common and yet dearly-prized luxuries, the readers found a richer enjoyment in old authors than in young jesters; and they who held the pen, discovered that occasionally they could be as witty as if they had been bred to the calling. Lastly, came freedom of thought and freedom of expression,—the latter sometimes exercised only with considerable daring; but against these, which symbolize an extending of civilization, the poor fool, his cap, bells, official stick, his quips, and his

quirps, his whole freight of fun, made utter and irretrievable shipwreck. I find authority for some portion at least of what is advanced above, in a passage from Puttenham, the author, among other things, of the 'Parthenaide.' In that work he compliments Queen Elizabeth on her maidenly qualities. the subjoined paragraphs he commends her behaviour at court, while he treats of a court deportment generally. And he pays Elizabeth this compliment at the expense of the Emperor Ferdinand, whom he roundly scolds for "running up and down stairs with so swift and nimble a pace as almost had not become a very mean man who had not gone on some hasty business." In mean men and fools, hurry is not very censurable. "But," says Puttenham, "in a prince, it is decent to go slow, and to march with leisure and with a certain grandity rather than gravity, as our sovereign lady and mistress, the very image of majesty and magnificence, is accustomed to go generally; unless it be when she walketh apace for her pleasure, or to catch her a heat in the cold mornings. Nevertheless, it is not so decent in a meaner person, as I have discerned in some counterfeit ladies in the country, which use it much to their own derision. This comeliness was wanting in Queen Mary, otherwise a very good and honourable princess." It was a "comeliness" which, when enforced, weighed heavily; and when it vanished, the heart enjoyed its own impulses, and was no longer attracted by the fool and his "marottes."

It is certain, that with all Elizabeth's refinement and taste, she had coarser men about her, as jesters, than her sister Mary. The uses to which some of them were put, is sufficiently remarkable. If Catholic Mary had her orthodox jester, the Reformed court of Elizabeth was not without its ultra-Protestant fool.

As we shall find a French jester employed to laugh down the Reformed religion and its professors in France, so in England, Pace, "the bitter fool," is said to have been en-

gaged in a particular way to support it, in England, by destroying certain outward and visible signs supposed to savour too strongly of Popery. According to this story, Pace was employed by Sir Francis Knollys, to break down a crucifix and remove the lighted tapers which Queen Elizabeth persisted in having in her private chapel, in spite even of the friendly and urgent remonstrance of Archbishop Parker, offered repeatedly, but without success. I do not know that there is any reliable authority for this story. Certainly, a jester might dare to do what a Lord Primate would only respectfully insinuate; and, perhaps, Parker remembers the improvement effected in the Queen's chapel by the court fool, Pace, when, in his letter to Sir William Cecil (October, 1560), after recommending certain personages for church preferment, he says: "Now, if either of them, or any of us all, should be feared to hurt the state of our churches, by exercising any extraordinary *patesing*, for packing and purchasing, this fear might sure be prevented. We have old precedents in law, practised in times past for such parties suspected, to be bound at their entry, to *have the churches in no worse case, by their defaults, than they found them;* and then what would you have more of us?" Now Pace, if he destroyed the cross and tapers in the Queen's chapel, may be said to have left the edifice in a worse condition than it was in when he entered it. It is quite certain that Sir Francis Knollys was violently eager for the destruction of these ornaments. Just a year previous to Parker alluding to "patesing" in churches, Knollys writes to that prelate: "Wishing you prosperity in all godliness, namely in your good enterprise against the enormities yet in the Queen's closet retained (although without the Queen's express commandment these toys were laid aside, till now a-late), I shall, with my hearty commendations, commit you and us all to the mighty protection of the living God." A gentleman who could so boldly write of the

"enormities in the Queen's closet," may well have ventured to employ a licensed jester to remove them. The editors of the Parker correspondence, John Bruce, Esq., and the Rev. T. Perowne, suggest that the word "patesing" refers to the *Pates*, Bishop of Worcester, in Mary's time. This indeed is probable enough; but if it be true that, in 1559, Knollys employed Pace to disfigure the Queen's closet, the term *may* have reference to the act committed by her Majesty's fool.

Pass we on now from Pace, and the question connected with him, to one of those fools who were rather hangers-on about court, than actually, exclusively and officially, engaged in the Royal service. Such a one seems to have been that Charles Chester, who resembled those official French jesters who found more delight in annoying the courtiers by his sarcasms, than amusing them, or his Sovereign, by his wit. Chester was especially severe in addressing coarse strictures on Raleigh and Lord Knollys, in their own hearing. Sir Walter resolved to be revenged; and to accomplish it, they invited Chester to supper. The buffoon accepted the invitation without any suspicion, and the two noble gentlemen made him exceedingly drunk at a repast at which he had eaten like Gargantua. Taking him in this condition, with the help of several servants, they fastened him up in a corner of a court-yard, and then some masons, engaged for the occasion, built a brick wall close round his person, and right up to his chin. They kept him there many hours, under a threat of building him in altogether. The jester was sobered by his terror, and begged piteously to be liberated. When ready to die with fear, indigestion, and other fatal influences, the frolicsome gentlemen exacted from him a solemn oath, that he would never again cut a joke or make a sarcasm at their expense; and the fool kept his word, if not out of a sense of honour, certainly out of a sense of terror.

Chester survived to be known to Ben Jonson, who has

immortalized him as Carlo Buffone, in 'Every Man Out of His Humour.' In the character of the persons prefixed to that piece, this buffoon is described as scurrilous and profane; rich in absurd similes and audacious lies; a "good feast-hound or banquet-beagle;" a thorough parasite and glutton, and a stupendous swiller of sack. "His religion is railing, and his discourse ribaldry;" and it is added of this perverse fellow, that he loaded those with the heaviest reproaches whom he had the greatest reason to respect. Such a character accords well with the noisy, evil-tempered fellow depicted by Aubrey (Lives, ii. p. 14), who tells us that the fool so offended a knight at a tavern by his impertinence, that the angry gentleman beat him, and stopped his mouth by sealing his beard and moustachios together with wax!

It is, however, to be noted, that Carlo in the play is superior to Carlo as described in the persons of the drama. If Jonson's picture be a veritable portrait, how exquisitely could this buffoon prattle of the advantage of being in debt —advantage so dear to fools of all classes in this present time! How admirably could he hit off an old over-scented lover, "who has his skin tanned in civet, to make his complexion strong, and the sweetness of his youth lasting in the smell of his sweet lady." How dashingly he hits off a city gentleman; how frolicsomely he exposes the city wives! He alludes to "standing by the fire in the presence," as if the ways of Court were familiar to him; and to taking tobacco with nobles, "over the stage in the lords' room," as if he had right of entry there. Some of his similes are drawn from his profession, for he describes a man's shield of arms as being "of as many colours as ever you saw any fool's coat in your life." What a *vade mecum* for asses is his instruction to dolts to show how they may pass for sensible fellows in society! How happily, yet briefly, does he paint a student learning to smoke! With what true

fool's satire does he exclaim, "*Friend!* is there any such foolish thing in the world?" and what fool's philosophy is there in the assertion that "Swaggering is a good argument of resolution!" We probably have something of the look of Chester afforded us in the remark of Macilente, "Pork! I think thou dost varnish thy face with the fat on't, it looks so like a glue-pot." And what a sharp touch of the jester's fence is the reply, "True, my raw-boned rogue, and if thou wouldst farce thy lean ribs with it, too, they would not, like ragged laths, rub out so many doublets as they do." When Puntarvolo seals up his mouth, as Aubrey's knight did that of the real Chester, we feel that it could not be for the same reason; and when the vain-glorious cavalier tells us that "Carlo comes not at Court," we are apt to think, that if Chester was of the times and not also of the household of Queen Elizabeth, she lacked a jester fit to rank with Clod.

This fool, who was an official court fool, must have been a fellow of as much humour as Yoric himself, if we may judge from one sample of his wit, which is no bad sample of his license also, and which is good warrant for his acuteness and discrimination, to boot.

At the court of Elizabeth there was many a cleric of the Vicar of Bray school, and among them Dean Perne, who had oscillated from one faith to another three or four times in about a dozen years, and who never felt in a state of finality anywhere. Perne, with Archbishop Whitgift, was in attendance on the Queen one wet day, when her Majesty was desirous of going out for a walk. The desire was an unwise one, for Elizabeth was in ill health; but the divines were not bold enough to dissuade her. But Clod, the Queen's fool, was also present, and *he* had the courage which the others lacked. "Madam," said he, "Heaven dissuades you, for it is cold and wet; and earth dissuades you, for it is damp and dirty. Heaven dissuades you, too, by this heavenly man, Archbishop Whitgift; and earth dis-

suades you, by me, your fool, Clod, lump of clay as I am. But if neither can prevail you, here is the Dean Perne, who is neither of heaven nor of earth, but hangs between the two, and he too dissuades you."

The above was witty license at the expense of a courtier; but Clod could exercise wit and audacity at the expense of the Queen. Elizabeth once reproached him with not altogether fulfilling the duties of his office. "How so?" asked Clod; "in what have I failed?" "In this," answered the Queen, "you are ready enough to point your sharp satire at the faults of other people, but you never say a word of mine." "Ah!" exclaimed the jester, "that is because I am saved the trouble by so many deputies. Why should I remind your Majesty of your faults, seeing that these are in everybody's mouth, and you may hear of them hourly?" After all, this was not near so bold as the answers which (years after) Whiston used to fling at Queen Caroline, consort of George II. Whiston, if not kept at Court like the jester of earlier times, was so frequent a sojourner there, that George II. got weary of this heterodox divine, who did not hesitate to tell him, when the King was inveighing against freedom of inquiry in religious matters, that if Luther had been of that opinion, his Majesty would never have been King of England! But where I find Queen Caroline and Whiston nearly resembling Queen Elizabeth and Clod, is on that well-known occasion at Hampton Court, when Caroline said to the eccentric divine, that, bold speaker as he was, he was, perhaps, not bold enough to tell her of her faults. Whiston proved that her Majesty was mistaken, by denouncing her very unseemly behaviour at divine service. Caroline laid part of the blame on the King, acknowledged her fault, promised amendment, and asked what was her next offence. "Nay, Madam," said Whiston, "it will be time enough to go to the second fault when you have fairly amended the first!" The eccentric character of

Whiston procured for him from Caroline just that impunity which Clod and Chester and others found at the hands of Elizabeth.

Having had occasion to mention these two Queens in the same paragraph, I will take the opportunity of adding, that if the time had passed by when official fools had place at court, it was not because Caroline was more refined than Elizabeth. The contrary was the fact, if we may believe the following passage, in the 'Reliquiæ Hearnianæ:'—"The present Duchess of Brunswick, commonly called Queen Caroline, is a very proud woman, and pretends to great subtlety and cunning. She drinks so hard, that her spirits are continually inflamed, and she is often drunk. The last summer, she went away from Orkney House, near Maidenhead (at which she had dined), so drunk, that she was sick in the coach all her journey, as she went along; *a thing much noted.*" In spite of the words in italics, the story must be taken with some allowance, for old Hearne was a furious Jacobite, and was likely to "embroider" a story to make it tell against a Hanoverian princess. One fact, however, is undisputed, namely, that no jester and king of the very coarsest times ever sat together and exchanged more licentious stories than Caroline and Sir Robert Walpole. The published life of the latter will support this assertion, though I need not make, in such a case, an especial reference. A study of the two reigns will, at least, serve to show that Elizabeth and her court fools were quite as refined as Caroline and her fine gentlemen.

The refinement of Elizabeth seems to have been justly appreciated by those who had to cater for her amusements. For instance, in the "Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court," edited for the Shakespeare Society, by Mr. P. Cunningham, there is an entry, in October 1573, to the following effect, made by the Master of the Revels:—"Item: sundry times for calling together of sundry players,

and for perusing, fitting, and reforming their matters otherwise not convenient to be showen before her Majesty." And again, in 1574, an entry of 40*s.* occurs, as the sum paid to a court official "for his pains in perusing and reforming of plays sundry times, as need required for her Majesty."

We have seen Will Sommers sleeping among the spaniels, and there are not wanting instances to show how sharp was the toil and poor the rest of many of those who laboured to amuse the leisure hours of Elizabeth. The following are examples. An entertainment is about to be given in the metropolitan palace, and the properties have to be brought from Richmond or Hampton Court; the passage by water seems to have been slow and uncertain, as is shown in an entry:—"To the porters that watched all night at the Blackfriars Bridge, for the coming of the stuff from court, 2*s.*" This "bridge" was doubtless a landing stage To this same Blackfriars "bridge" are brought a number of children, who had been down to Hampton Court to perform in a masque before her Majesty. The little Cupids had looked warm and plump and rosy enough in the presence of the Queen; but they were all sent back (nine of them) in an open boat, in the winter of 1573, and in consequence, there is an entry which has little of the spirit of "Revels" in it, to this effect:—"To Thomas Totnall, for fire, and victuals for the children, when they landed, some of them being cold and sick and hungry, 6*s.* 6*d.*"

Not to digress further from the taste of the Queen, as exhibited by her in connection with her court pleasures, I may further state that we have good evidence that Elizabeth was neither unrefined herself nor admired lack of refinement in those who were about her, whether friends, attendants, or jesters, in the frequently-printed account given by Bohun, in his 'Character of Queen Elizabeth.' "At supper she would divert herself with her friends and

attendants; and if they made her no answer, she would put them upon mirth and pleasant discourse, with great civility. She would then also admit Tarleton, a famous comedian and a pleasant talker, and other such-like men, to divert her with the stories of the town and the common jests or accidents, but so that they kept within the bounds of modesty and chastity. In the winter-time, after supper, she would sometimes hear a song or a lesson or two played upon the lute; but she would be much offended if there was any rudeness to any person, any reproach, or licentious reflection used. Tarleton, who was then the best comedian in England, had made a pleasant play, and when it was acting before the Queen, he pointed at Sir Walter Raleigh, and said, 'See, the Knave commands the Queen!'—for which he was corrected by a frown from the Queen; yet he had the confidence to add that he (Raleigh) was of too much and too intolerable a power. And going on with the same liberty, he reflected on the over-great power and riches of the Earl of Leicester; which was so universally applauded by all that were present, that she thought fit, for the present, to bear these reflections with a seeming unconcernedness. But yet she was so offended that she forbade Tarleton and all her jesters from coming near her table, being inwardly displeased with this impudent and unreasonable liberty."

The maids of honour and the ladies in waiting seem to have been more inclined to follow the example set by their royal mistress than the male courtiers. There was one of these fine gentlemen who *would* address himself to Mistress Mary Ratcliffe, one of Elizabeth's maidens of honour, in such a tone that she relished neither his conversation nor discourse. At length, she told him "that his wit was like a custard, nothing good in it but the sop, and when that was eaten you may throw away the rest."

The maids of honour were not at all disinclined to be

frolicsome; but this was with no ill purpose. Observe, however, how this humour was indecently corrected by that same Knollys who was offended with the cross in the Queen's chapel, and employed Pace, the court fool, to pull it down. Knollys "had his lodgings at court, where some of the ladies and maids of honour used to frisk and hey about, in the next room, to his extreme disquiet o' nights, though he had often warned them of it; at last, he gets one to bolt their own back door, when they were all in, one night, at their revels, strips off [to] his shirt, and so, with a pair of spectacles on his nose, and Aretino in his hand, comes marching in at a postern door of his own chamber, reading very gravely, full upon the faces of them. Now let the reader judge what a sad spectacle and pitiful fright these poor creatures endured, for he faced them, and often traversed the room, in this posture, above an hour."

I cite the above illustration of a court jest from the L'Estrange manuscripts, edited by Mr. Thoms. My esteemed and modest friend has supplied a word in brackets, for which, I fear, there is no warrant. I have no doubt that the MS. as it stands is correct, and Knollys was not the last courtier who thought it an excellent court jest to appear in the condition described. One of the greatest wits at the court of Vienna, the Prince de Ligne, is thus described by the Countess de Bohm in 'Les Prisons de 1793:' —"Je l'ai trouvé le matin *entièrement nu*, recevant des visites, parlant à des fournisseurs. Il me présenta même à sa belle-fille logée près de lui." If the court wit of Vienna could do this, and a lady not be startled thereby, in the last century, what may not a courtier have dared a century earlier? However this may be, we have seen that Elizabeth would not tolerate forwardness even in Richard Tarleton, who was, perhaps, the most celebrated of the court jesters to that Queen, and one of the most perfect low comedians that ever trod the stage. To the Leicester above-named

he is said to have owed his introduction to Elizabeth. Tarleton was a Shropshire boy, and was keeping his father's swine, near Condover, when an officer of the Earl's household, on his way to the Earl's estates in Denbigh, entered into conversation with the young swineherd, and was so struck by his "happy unhappy answers," that he took the merry lout, nothing loath, with him," and Tarleton seems to have passed thence to a higher court.

But, not immediately. It is, indeed, somewhat difficult to trace the early part of the career of this jester before he took office under the Queen. It is not, however, altogether impossible, since Mr. Halliwell edited a purified edition of Tarleton's jests, prefaced it by a biographical sketch, and added elucidatory notes and confirmatory extracts from contemporary and other authors. From all these sources we make out that Tarleton served some sort of apprenticeship in London, and must have had a very fair education for one of his class, seeing that he is described as being "superficially seen in learning," and having so much as "a bare insight into the Latin tongue." Not so bad for a young swineherd,—whose wit stood him in good stead for what he lacked in book-learning. To what calling he was bound apprentice is not known: he is said to have been for some time a water carrier; and it was, perhaps, disgust at the drudgery, added to inclination for other liquids, that made of him a tavern-keeper. His grosser sense led him to tippling; but he had intellect enough to qualify him for writing ballads and composing historical pantomimes. Like many modern actors, he united the parts of player and vintner; starred on many stages, sometimes played more than one part in the same piece, and he shifted from inn to inn, as landlord, as he did from stage to stage, as an actor. He was Boniface respectively of three taverns, at least; at Colchester, and in London, in Gracechurch-street and Paternoster-row.

He had probably been for some years a player, slowly

rising, by dint of his wit, his squint, and his flat nose, to pre-eminence, when in 1583 he was appointed one of the Queen's players, and one of the grooms of her chamber. Stowe remarks, that till the year just mentioned, Elizabeth had no company of actors of her own, but that at the date named, and at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, twelve of the best players were chosen from among the companies in the service of divers great lords; and that these were "sworn the Queen's servants, and were allowed wages and liveries as grooms of the chamber." Stowe notices "two rare men" among this selected troop, "viz. Thomas Wilson, for a quick, delicate, refined, extemporal wit; and Richard Tarleton,—for a wondrous, plentiful, pleasant, extemporal wit, he was the wonder of his time."

As court jester, Tarleton became as famous and as influential as any official who ever wore clown's suit. Fuller calls him a master of his faculty, who, "when Queen Elizabeth was serious, I dare not say sullen, and out of good humour, he could *undumpish* her at his pleasure." As in other courts, suitors to the Sovereign not unfrequently first presented themselves to the jester. "He was their usher to prepare their advantageous access to her." He doubtless lined his pockets with pistoles thereby; and for his royal pay he also gave good measure of wholesome severities. "He told the Queen," says Fuller, "more of her faults than most of her chaplains; and cured her melancholy better than all of her physicians."

If the Queen admired Dick, the latter had a great measure of reverence for his mistress. He could compare her, he said, to nothing more fitly than a sculler; for, he added, "neither the Queen nor the sculler hath a fellow." He nevertheless, and as a matter of course, could take great liberties with her. The very first of the 'court witty jests,' tells us of his attempting to draw the Queen out of a fit of discontent by "a quaint jest," in which he pretended to be

a thirsty drunkard, and called aloud for beer. The liquor was duly supplied to him, and that so liberally, that Elizabeth gave orders that he should have no more, lest he should turn beast, and shame himself. "Fear you not," said Tarleton, "for your beer is small enough." So, perhaps, was the jester's wit, but the Queen thought well of it, for "her Majesty laughed heartily, and commanded that he should have enough."

Elizabeth probably enjoyed fully as much the jests which her chartered buffoon made at the expense of her courtiers. Some of these were sorry enough; and he would be no less savage on the personal defects and deformities of ladies as well as lords, than the most unscrupulous of the "Fous du Roi" at the court of France. To a lady, suffering from an eruption on the face, and who consequently declined to drink wine with the rest, he exclaimed, "A murrain of that face which makes all the body fare the worse for it." This rudeness, which drove the poor lady from table, was only rewarded by a shout of laughter.

Tarleton wore his fool's attire when the Queen dined; and even attended her thus attired when she dined abroad, "in his clown's apparel; being all dinner-while in the presence with her, to make her merry." There seems to have been a distrust of the power of the host and the guests to make themselves agreeable, and so the Queen took her fool with her, even when she dined at the Lord Treasurer's, at Burleigh House, in the Strand. It was to the gate of that house that Tarleton gave the name of "his Lordship's almsgate," because, he said, it was for ever closed.

On one occasion, the noble owner of this mansion having thus entertained the Queen, besought her Majesty to remain all night; a request to which she would not for a moment listen. The lords present applied to Tarleton, offering him any reward if he could succeed in inducing the Queen to sleep at Burleigh House. The rest of the story

is so strange, that I prefer leaving it to my readers as it is given in the Shakespeare Society's reprint of the old jest-book.—"Quoth he, 'Procure me the parsonage of Sherd.' They caused the patent to be drawn presently. He got on a parson's gown and a corner cap, and standing upon the stairs where the Queen should descend, he repeated these words:—'A parson or no parson? A parson or no parson?' but after she knew his meaning, she not only stayed all night, but the next day willed that he should have possession of the benefice. A madder parson was never; for he threatened to turn the bell-metal into lining for his purse, which he did, the parsonage and all, into ready money."

Among his best similes, perhaps, was the one he made when asked by a lord what soldiers were like in time of peace. "They are like chimneys in summer," said Tarleton, whose neat jest on this occasion seems to have passed off without laughter. But perhaps this was not said by him. Not all the jests set down to him were uttered by him. That which describes him as replying to a courtier who saluted him with a "Good morrow, fool and knave,"—"I can't bear both; I 'll take the first, you are welcome to the other,"—is attributed to an Italian jester.

At this period the court jester was not bound to reside within the precincts of the court, and to wear no suit but his clown's apparel, without permission to the contrary. This custom had even fallen into disuse in France, where it had prevailed for a very lengthened period. Tarleton's official duties, however, kept him late at court. We find him on one occasion wending homeward at one in the morning, when it was unlawful for the lieges to be abroad after ten o'clock at night. He accordingly fell into the hands of the watch, to whom, on being challenged, he had announced himself as "a woman;" for what is the use, he asked, of my telling you what you know? The watch declared he must be committed for being out-of-doors

after ten o'clock. "It is now past one!" cried the watch, emphasizing the enormity. "Good!" said Tarleton; "if it be past one o'clock, it will not be ten these eight hours. Watchmen had wont to have more wit; but for want of sleep they have turned fools." The guardians of the night recognized the Queen's jester, and they let him pass, rejoiced at being entertained for a moment by an official whose duty it was to entertain her Majesty's sacred self.

On another occasion, when challenged in company with two others, he announced his companions as being makers of eyes and light. The pious custodes solemnly laid hold of him for flat blasphemy; but when he explained that one of his companions made spectacles and the other candles, of course the watch fell into uncontrollable laughter, as watchmen will do, even at smaller jests than this.

He was not always in such seemly society as the above; for we meet with him angering a certain huffing Kate, at a tavern; running up a score for sixteen dozen pots of ale at a country ale-house; bandying wit, at his own inn-door, with beggars, whom he sometimes found a match for him; and, after living for days at other hostelries, getting himself arrested as a Jesuit in disguise, and then refusing to discharge his account, because of the false arrest. At ordinaries he would expose the first he could find to his rascally purpose, to the ridicule of the company; and a finely-dressed gentleman passing down Fleet-street, was sure to have an unpleasant time of it, if he happened to be espied by Tarleton. His wife was as often the victim of his wit as any one else; but she was often as sharp as he, and the smart things said were, like Lady Mary Montague at a "Twitnam Assembly," more smart than clean. When he was keeping an ordinary in Paternoster-row, he and Mistress Richard were invited out to supper, "and because he was a man noted, she would not go out with him into the street, but entreats him to keep on one side, and she another; which

he consented to. But as he went, he would cry out to her and say, 'Turn this way, wife;' and anon, 'On this side, wife,' —so the people flocked the more to laugh at them. But his wife, more than mad angry, goes back again, and almost forswore his company." They kept together, nevertheless, at the ordinary, where his customers not only found wit in the royal jester, but wit in his mustard, as he proved, to his own satisfaction at least, when he said that mustard and the person dining, resembled "a witty scold meeting another scold; and knowing this scold will scold, begins to scold first: so the mustard, being licked up, and knowing that you will bite it, begins to bite you first!" It must surely have been brighter jokes than this that procured for him invitations to dinner at the houses of aldermen and justices, who thought it well to treat a Queen's jester, and laugh at jokes that might have been dished up for their liege lady.

As a stage-player, Tarleton was the favourite clown of the people at large. They roared at the coarse extemporary songs which he rattled forth for their amusement and his profit. They shouted at his admirable "gagging," his improvised speeches, his interlarded jokes with the audience, and his allusions even to religious controversies then raging. Learned physicians praised the voice which uttered, the comical face which heightened, the wit, and the head which was the very temple and head-quarters of facetiousness. It mattered little whether he was in or out of the vein, he was comic in spite of himself; in spite of themselves, people would laugh, and all essayers in his line were frightened out of their specialty, out of sheer despair of being able to be tolerated while he lived or was remembered. No wonder the Queen liked to see him act, as well as listen to his jests at court. The very rudest as well as the highest, could appreciate him as an actor—all but the county justice immortalized, although not named, by Nash, and in whose

presence, as also that of the whole township over which this justice presided, Tarleton and his fellow-comedians were playing. The jester had scarcely made his head visible on the stage when the country auditory burst into fits of laugher. "Whereat," says Nash, "the justice, not a little moved, and seeing, with his becks and nods, he could not make them cease, he went with his staff and beat them round about unmercifully on the bare pates, in that they, being but farmers and poor country hinds, could presume to laugh at the Queen's man, and make no more account of her cloth in his presence."

Metropolitan magistrates gave more license, and London audiences were not charged with disrespect of her Majesty, because they laughed immoderately at her jester. Tarleton was one night playing at the Bull, in Bishopsgate-street. The play was an old one, touching Henry V.; he, of course, played the clown, but the actor of Judge Gascoyne being absent, Tarleton good-naturedly undertook to play the Judge also. The actor who performed the part of the Prince, dealt the Judge such a box of the ear, when that pseudo-historical incident came on, that Gascoyne shook again, but he did not forget his dignity. He re-appeared as Clown, to whom is told the unseemly scene in court. "Strike a judge!" cried Tarleton. "It could not be but terrible to him, when the report so terrifies me that methinks the blow remains still on my cheek; that it burns again!" "The people," adds the narrator, "laughed at this mightily;" and we may well fancy a clever and a favourite low comedian turning such an incident to capital account.

It was not exactly a time for jests when

> "In the year 1588," cried Philip, "the English I 'll humble.
> I've taken it into my Majesty's pate, and their lion, oh down he shall tumble!"

We do not suppose, however, that the Queen's jester fell sick

at his lodgings in Haliwel-street, Shoreditch, because of the Spanish Armada. He is supposed to have been seized by the plague. On the 3rd of September, in the year just named, he, at all events, fell mortally ill; and he at once made his will: in this document he is described as "one of the Gromes of the Quene's Majestie's chamber." He leaves all his goods and "cattells," etc. etc., to his son Philip; but there is nothing to show that they exist anywhere. Nevertheless, he appoints guardians to his son, delivers to them "one penny of the good and lawful money of England,"—"to the use of the said Philipp Tarleton, by waye of possession and seisin of all my said goodes and cattells," and having duly executed this deed, which is of some length, the Queen's jester turned his face to the wall and died, on the evening of the day on which he had fallen ill. Before night had come on, he was lying in a grave of the parish churchyard; where many of the Elizabethan actors lie around him.

People reckoned from his time as from an era. "The year of Tarleton's death" was as common a saying as "the year of the Armada." His portrait was to be seen in every house; and in some residences, above the altar of Cloacina was suspended the *effigies* of joyous Dick Tarleton.

At this period, the household fool was still, and he continued to be so for many subsequent years, to be found on most establishments of any consequence. Some of the best specimens of this class are to be found in Armin's "Nest of Ninnies." Before turning to the pages of the old literary actor, it may be as well to state that the ordinary dress of the jester of this period, is depicted by Mr. Douce, as consisting of a motley coat, with a girdle, bells at the skirt and, sometimes, at the elbows. The breeches and hose fitted close to the body, the colour on each leg being different. The hood covered not only the head, but the shoulders, and was crowned by the usual cock's-comb. Some jesters carried a staff with a fool's head at the end

of it; others a staff suspended from which was a blown bladder with a few peas in it. This was the costume of the artificial fool. The natural fool was mostly attired in a long gown-like dress, occasionally of costly velvet, and adorned with yellow fringe,—*yellow* being then commonly known as the "fool's colour," as dark blue was that of the serving man.

The first of the household fools named by Armin, "Jack Oates," carried a small black-jack quart at his girdle, for Jack's delight was in beer. He was tall, unwieldly, misshapen. He was given to sport, was quite as much given to swear, was conceited, gamesome, gleesome, "apt to joys," —but "nastie." He was the servant, or jester, of Sir William Hollis, whom he called "Willy," and otherwise used with great familiarity. When strange servants came to the house, he was addicted to setting them at loggerheads; and once, when an earl, arriving on a visit, greeted Lady Hollis, at her husband's side, by a kiss, Jack Oates gave him a box of the ear, for which Sir William gave the jester a whipping. He deserved as much, for his sorry excuse for giving a cuff to the Earl. "He asked the Earl where his hand was. 'Here,' quoth he. With that Jack shakes him by it, and says:—'I mistook it before, not knowing your ear from your hand; being so like one another.'" The compliment was so ill-turned that Oates was scourged for this also.

This fool could not bear to be in the hall, like him in Mr. Thornbury's ballad. "He was a little proud-minded, and was therefore altogether in the great chamber, at my lady's or Sir William's elbow. Sir William could arouse him to wrath, if not to wit, by threatening to hire a new jester, and yet "he loved the fool above all, and that the household knew." But the threat would sometimes cause Oates to run a muck through the hall, beating all in his way, and crying "Hang Sir Willy! Hang Sir Willy!"

It is difficult to fancy how such nuisances could be tolerated, much less loved; and indeed even Sir William Hollis, who loved his fool above all, seems, or pretended, to have got weary of him. There was at least a feigned hiring of a new jester, and the noble company at dinner, on hearing it, "ting'd with a knife at the bottom of a glass, as tolling the bell for the fool," whose colour, we are told, came and went, "like a wise man ready to make a good end." Jack, however, had more of the brute than the sage, and he so fell upon his rival that he nearly killed him, and did actually put out one of the poor fellow's eyes. We can credit what follows, that "ever after Jack Oates would not endure to hear any talk of any other fool, to be there," but one can hardly credit what is added, viz.—"that the Knight durst not make such a motion." The influence of these fellows must have been great, if they were all like Oates, and the subserviency of their masters must have been on a par with their egregious folly.

As the fool ruled in the hall, so also would he try to establish a despotism in the kitchen; but the sovereign cook there could successfully banish him the territory by flinging over him a ladle of scalding soup. Such feuds were there in the Lincolnshire household of Sir William Hollis, who, on one occasion, had invited a number of friends to a repast, the chief feature of which was a magnificent quince-pie made of fruit "ready preserved at pothecaries," in the county town. The cook expected to derive great honour from the dish, and Oates determined to foil his expectations. Jack feigned to be ill, and Sir William kindly led him by the hand to the kitchen fire-side, where the Knight left him seated, with charge to the cook to look to his comforts. Cook and fool, of course, speedily fell out, and Oates, to avenge himself, watched his opportunity, seized on the quince-pie as it was about to be taken out of the oven, and, hiding it beneath his long gown, ran off with it.

The pie burnt him so terribly that he could think of no better place to eat it in, than the moat. Into this he plunged up to the shoulders, and, cooling the dish in the water, greedily devoured the whole of the contents. The cook, meanwhile, rushed to the dining-hall to make complaint to the host and his expectant guests. "They laught and ran to the windows to see the jest. Jack fed, and feeding greedily, ever as he burnt his mouth, with haste, dipt the pie into the water to cool it. 'Oh!' says the cook, 'it is Sir William's own pie, sirrah!'—'Oh!' says Jack, 'hang thee and Sir Willie too.' . . . 'Save Sir William some,' says one. 'Save my lady some!' says another. 'By James! not a bit,' says Jack, and ate up all, to the wonder of the beholders." Such was the amusement of nobles and gentles, in the days when fools were flourishing, a long time ago!

Armin gives other instances, in the case of "lean Leonard," fool "to a kind gentleman who dwells in the merry forest of Sherwood," and whose name Armin omits, "fearing I too much offend by meddling with his fool." Leonard was a flaxen, curly-haired fellow, who

> "Plays on thoughts, as girls with beads,
> When their mass they stamber."

He seems, moreover, to have been slightly deaf, long-necked, hook-nosed, thickly bearded, and sullen of visage. He was remarkable for a very expensive sort of boisterousness. He would play games of chance with imaginary adversaries, with whom he would fall out, and in fighting with which shadowy antagonists, he would injure or destroy the furniture of a whole room. When his appetite prompted, he would break open the dairy, swallow the new cheese-curds, destroy those he could not devour, overthrow the cream-bowls, and then abscond for awhile to Mansfield in Sherwood, till the short-lived anger of his master had passed

away. On hearing his patron praise a hawk which he possessed, lean Leonard, taking the praise in a gastronomic sense, went and wrung the hawk's neck, and nearly choked himself by trying to devour it, feathers and all. He seems to have been, at other times, employed in carrying manure from the stables to the garden, in a barrow in which he made his bed by night. One winter time, he showed his professional wit by lighting a fire in his barrow, to warm himself by. The fire seized on the barrow, and this, all in flames, he trundled into the hall, among the men and maids, severely burning several of the latter, and thence into the barn, which was filled with hay and straw, and which was with difficulty saved from destruction. "The world laughed a good deal at these jests," says Robin,—which shows how mischief could tickle it. The only anecdote I can find of Leonard which may be fairly smiled at, is the one which tells us of a "country plow-jogger who, coming behind Leonard with a lump of shoemaker's wax in his hand, clapt him on the head, and asked him how he did." The fool felt the pitch ball, and enraged at not being able to get rid of it, fell to furious fight with the "plow-jogger," who "belaboured the fool cunningly, and got the fool's head under his arm, and bobbed his nose. The fool, remembering how his head was, strikes it up, and hits the fellow's mouth with the pitched place, so that the hair of his beard and the hair of the clown's head were glued together. The fellow cried, the fool exclaimed, and could not suddenly part. In the end, the people, after much laughing at the jest, let them part fair."

Armin also notices a contemporary fool named Jack Miller, "one that was more beloved among ladies than thought can hatch or opinion produce." His principal merit seems to have been in imitating players who dressed in the kitchens and played in the halls of gentlemen's houses, and who led him into various mishaps, by practising on his simplicity.

He was famous also for singing a song called Deryes Fair, and for speaking sentences full of the letters *b* and *p*, which he could not pronounce without a world of stammering and stuttering, which was a wonderful provocative of mirth to noble lords and ladies who hired him on purpose. Armin saw and heard Miller once exhibit at "a gentleman's not far from Upton upon Seuerne in Gloxestershire." At the table were "many gallants and gentlewomen, almost the state of the country." Well, this state company roared lustily at the fool; one elderly gentlewoman even fainted with exhaustion from immoderate hilarity, and "one proper young gentlewoman among the rest, because she would not seem too immodest with laughter," confined herself to making a remark which caused ten times more mirth than the fool's stammering, and which was received with an indulgence which a Roman Emperor especially extended to such comments, by imperial decree.

The last fool in Armin's 'Nest,' is "Blue John." There is nothing of him however worth narrating. He was an idiot, protected, lodged, and boarded at Christ's Hospital. He joined in the processions of the boys, imitated the preachers who held forth before them, ran on many messages and made more mistakes, was void of wit, and yet was sufficiently esteemed to induce his patrons to have his portrait taken. They who are curious to see the counterfeit presentment of this species of fool, may gratify their desire by a visit to the "Hospital," where the boys still wear the colour that was worn by "Blue John."

I may perhaps fittingly notice here, that, during the reign of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties especially, there was a species of "fool" to be found in great households, who was there for the profit rather than the amusement of the master of the house. "It is very strange," said Charles II. to some of his courtiers, "that every one of my friends keeps a tame knave." The *tame knaves* thus spoken of (in the 'Lives of the

Norths,' ch. ii. p. 247), were persons who had been pronounced each *Fatuus purus et idiota*, by a jury; and it was a common practice to beg such a man for a fool, that is to apply to the crown, for the applicant to have custody of the lands and person of the so-called "fool." In illustration of this practice there are several anecdotes cited by Mr. W. J. Thoms in his 'Anecdotes and Traditions derived from MS. Sources,' and edited by him for the Camden Society. The following illustration is from the manuscript papers of Sir Nicholas L'Estrange, and has reference to the reign of which I am now treating.

"Lord North held old Bladwell in his custody as a lunatic, and carried the poor fellow about with him. His lordship was desirous of having and holding Bladwell as his fool, but the obstacle was, not that Bladwell wanted wit, but that he could not be proved to be a fool at all. He had some spirit of mischief in him, of the fool's quality; as, for instance, when Lord North, taking Bladwell with him to a gentleman's house, left his lunatic companion in the dining-room, while lord and gentleman conferred together in another room. Bladwell, left alone, amused himself with looking at the figures on the tapestry, and happening to espy that of a jester among them, he quickly cut the figure from the costly arras, and laid it flat on the ground. When the gentlemen returned to the dining room, the owner of the house, observing the damage done to his tapestry, was very indignant; but Bladwell sought to appease his wrath by remarking, "Pray be content, Sir, I have saved your property, and not injured it; for if my lord there had seen the fool, he would have wanted to have and hold him in his own household; and you would have lost that which you may now keep. I have done you a service, Sir."

During the reign of James I., Sir Christopher Paston was pronounced by a jury, to be in the same condition as "old Bladwell" (who was a wealthy Norfolk gentleman). The

knight's family seem to have had charge of their kinsman, whose infirmity was made the ground for a retort, as will be seen by the following incident, recorded also by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange. "Jack Paston began one time to jest upon Capon (who sat very silent and replied nothing), and told him merrily, that he never met with such a dull, clay-pated fool, that could not answer a word, and bade him remember he out-fooled him once. 'No, faith,' says Capon, 'I were a fool indeed, to deal with you at that weapon. I know the strain of the Pastons too well, and you must needs be right bred for it; for I am sure your race has not been without a good fool these fifty years and upwards.'"

It would seem, too, that ambassadors carried in their train individuals who represented the jesters at the court from which the envoys were despatched, even as the latter represented the sovereigns by whom they were commissioned. Thus, when the Earl of Carlisle repaired to the court of France, in 1616, deputed by James I., he went thither at the head of an extraordinary retinue. "The Lady Haddington," says Mr. John Chamberlain, in a contemporary letter, quoted in Nichols's 'Progresses of James I.,' "hath bestowed a favour upon him that will not easily fall to the ground, for she says, the flower and beauty of his embassy consists in three mignards, three dancers, and three fools or buffoons. The mignards are himself, Sir Harry Rich, and Sir George Goring. The dancers, Sir Gilbert Hoghton, Auchmuty, and Abercromby. The fools, or buffoons, are Sir Thomas Jermyn,* Sir Ralph Sheldon, and Thomas Badger."

These knights were not the only individuals of the court of James I. who might aspire to fill the office of fool, either in foreign palaces or at home. Sir George Fitz-Jeffroy might have ranked with any of the above. L'Estrange (quoted by Mr. Thoms) says, he might have been "begged

* Father of Harry Jermyn, first Earl of St. Alban's.

for a fool;" and in proof of the good ground he has for the assertion, tells the following incident, which occurred at Royston in 1607. "Fitz-Jeffrey being brought up a back-stair to the King, to be knighted, was turned out another way, to pass through the presence chamber, which he entered, with his cap on his head, and many of the nobility of the court being there bare, and he, like the Egyptian Apis, thinking they did 'Sir reverence' to the new knight, he came to them very courteously, and desired them to be covered, for truly it was more than he expected at their hands, though his Majesty had conferred a great honour upon him. They thanked him very kindly, and desired to be excused, for they knew their duties, and so long as he was in the room they would not be covered. Upon that, away goes the fool, so puffed and swollen with his new honour, as when he comes home, he stuffs the clothes he was knighted in, and hangs them up in his hall for ensigns and monuments of an incomparable coxcomb, worthy to be begged by his respective gentleman of the presence-chamber."

When such "tame knaves" might be had for nothing, it is almost a matter of surprise that the Sovereign cared for other buffoons about him. But, at the court of James I. both King and Queen found pleasure in maintaining official fools upon their household. Of the fool of Anne of Denmark, that sovereign lady who purchased precious stones so liberally of the father of Herrick the poet—old Herrick, the jeweller—we know little but the name. In the accounts of John Lord Harrington, of Exton, as Treasurer of the Chambers to the wife of James I., Horace Walpole found an item—"Paid to T. Mawe, for the diet and lodging of Tom Derry, her Majesty's jester, thirteen weeks, 10*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.*" At between sixteen and seventeen shillings per week, Tom Derry cannot be said to have been a very expensive toy to her Majesty. He was of importance enough to have his

name given to a gallery at Somerset House, in which he used to loiter and exchange jokes with lords and ladies. An entry in the weekly accounts of the time of Charles I. proves this, inasmuch as mention is there made of an order "for colouring Tom Derry's gallery at Somerset House." Tom is also incidentally mentioned in the extracts from the accounts of revels at court, edited for the Shakespeare Society by Mr. P. Cunningham; and to this extract my attention was kindly directed by Mr. Cunningham himself:—"To Thomas Derry, her Majesty's jester, upon a warrant signed by the Lord Chamberlain, dated at Whitehall, 16th July, 1612, for the diet of the said Thomas Derry, and John Mawe his man, from the 25th day of December, 1611, to the 24th of June following, being 26 weeks, at 7*s.* the week, 9*l.* 2*s.*" It is curious that the sum put down for the weekly diet of two persons is less than half of that named in the former entry for the diet and lodging of *one*. The first entry may have applied to two persons; and in calculating cost, it is necessary to multiply the sum by five, to obtain an idea of its real value as represented in modern currency.

Before Anne possessed Tom Derry to find her in mirth, she used to tax her own ladies in waiting, with whom, when at Winchester palace, she would wile away long winter evenings by playing with them at 'Rise, pig, and go,' 'Come, penny, follow me,' 'Fire!' and, 'I pray, my lord, give me a course in your park.' I only regret that Nichols, who tells us thus much in the Appendix to his Progresses of James I., does not add instructions for the playing these games.

The half-year included in the table of the above entries was one in which Tom Derry must have had to draw largely on his wits, to amuse the Queen; for it was then she was most savagely possessed by implacable hatred of "that fellow," as she called him, poor Sir Thomas Overbury; and Prince Henry was sickening. But both their Majesties were as fond of indulging their taste for dissipation as they were of

yielding to their strong prejudices. I find the *Merry Wives of Windsor* played on a Sunday night at Whitehall; and Tom Derry was probably present in October, 1611, when "The Sunday following, att Grinwidg," before the Queen and the Prince was played 'The Silver Aiedg,' and the next night following, 'Lucrecia.' With jester, sports, and plays on Sunday as well as other nights, the Queen was not much the happier; and this may be accounted for,—she was the most amiable person possible when she was not put out; she never uttered an angry word except upon some provocation, yet often with little; she was seldom obstinate except in resolutely maintaining her own will, and, like Croaker in the Comedy, was very easily led whenever she had her own way. Tom Derry himself must have hardly earned all he obtained, from so gracious a mistress as Anne of Denmark. A subsequent page will show that one at least of her old and faithful servants could envy the condition of Derry the Jester.

James I. of England only continued a fashion which his grandfather, James V. of Scotland, adopted during the few years of his majority. We learn this incident from Dr. Irving, who informs us that it was the duty of the Scottish court fools, like those in other royal households, to amuse their patrons by their wit and humour, by bold and startling remarks on passing occurrences of importance, and by ludicrous representations of incidents and characters. In Scotland, too, as elsewhere, the jesters were compelled to take as rough jokes as they gave, and these were sometimes of the very rudest sort. They were of the same quality in England, where the King set the example of coarse jesting. An assertion which no one will require me to prove who remembers what James added to his laugh when he took leave of his hospitable entertainer, Fortescue, in the porch at Cornbury. Those who are curious to know, will find the gracious pleasantry detailed in Osborn.

One sample of the Scottish court fool, as narrated by Dr. Irving, will perhaps suffice to give some notion of the wit,—or the want of it,—patronized in the North. The name of the jester was John Low, and this John was once rebuked by a courtier for not having unbonneted and bowed to a number of lords and fine gentlemen who had passed him. "I did not know they were lords," said John; "by what token do you know a lord?" "Well," said the courtier, "outwardly, at all events, by their dress; you see them decked in velvet, and with gold about their necks." "Very good," said John; "I'll not forget to be civil to the first I meet." And thereupon, a short time after, Low was seen bowing and scraping obsequiously to the mules in the court-yard, to the amazement of the King and his courtiers. "Why are you crying 'good day,' and making your leg to those beasts?" asked a Chamberlain. "Beasts!" exclaimed Low, in feigned surprise; "I thought they were lords! Look at their velvet coverings, and the gold trimmings about their necks. I was told these were outward tokens of noble lords and gallant gentlemen. What could a courteous fool do but bid them *good day!* Sure, I shall never learn the difference between a lord and a beast."

Our James I. may have heard of, but he probably never saw, his grandfather's fool, Jemmy Camber, "who, being but young, was for the King *caught up*." He barely exceeded three feet in height; but at the age of forty years he measured above six feet in girth, and "would never be but a St. Vincent's turnip, thick and round." He was smooth of face, fair of speech, but malicious in his acts. For his further portraiture, here it is limned by Armin:—

> "His head was small, his hair long on the same;
> One ear was bigger than the other, far;
> His forehead full, his eyes shone like a flame,
> His nose flat, and his beard small, yet grew square.

His lips but little, and his wit was less.
But wide of mouth, for truth, I must confess.
His middle thick. as I have said before;
Indifferent thighs and knees, but very short,
His legs be square, a foot long and no more;
Whose very presence made the King much sport.
And a pearl spoon he still wore in his cap,
To eat his meat he loved and got by hap.
A pretty little foot; but a big hand,
On which he ever wore rings rich and good.
Backward, well made as any in that land,
Though thick; *and he did come of gentle blood.*"

Of as gentle blood as Jamie was, he was "caught up" for the King's sport. This fool Camber, with no wit of his own, yet gave rise to the well-known proverb, "Hit or miss." King James, to cure the fool's obesity, sent him to sea, under the illustrious guardianship of the Earl of Huntley, "at whose departure," says Armin, "they discharged ordinance, as one that departed from the land with the King's favour. Jamie, hearing the ordinance go off, would ask, 'What do they now?' 'Marry!' says the Earl, 'they shoot at our enemies.' 'Oh!' says Camber; 'hit, I pray God!' Again they discharge. 'What do they now?' quoth he. 'Marry, now the enemy shoot at us.' Oh, miss, I pray God!' says Jemmy Camber. So ever after it was a jest in the Scottish court, 'Hit or miss, quoth Jemmy Camber.' . . . And long time after, this jest was in memory; yea I heard it myself, and some will talk of it at this day," says Armin, whose book was published in 1608.

Camber was a natural fool who was cheated out of his French crowns, and sometimes of other things, by sharp-witted lasses. He prattled of the sun blowing cold and the wind shining hot; ran mock races with gigantic footmen, the King laying a thousand marks on the fool, and Lady Carmichael backing the flunkey; and he had extremely dirty tricks played upon him, which highly amused those august per-

sonages, but the telling of which would not tend to either profit or pleasure. There is something better worth narrating in the account of Camber's death; which I borrow from Armin. "The King's chamberlain bid him arise and come to the King. 'I will not,' quoth he, 'I will go make my grave.' See how things chanced. He spake truer than he was aware. Jemmy arose, made him ready, takes his horse, and rides to the churchyard in the high town, where he found the sexton, *as the custom is there, making nine graves, three for men, three for women, and three for children; and whoso dies next, first come, first served.*

"'Lend me thy spade,' says Jemmy; and with that digs a hole, which hole he bids the sexton make for his grave, and doth give him a French crown. The man, willing to please him (more for his gold than his pleasure), did so; and the fool gets on his horse, and rides to a gentleman of the town, and, on the sudden, within two hours after, he died; of whom the sexton telling, Jemmy was buried there indeed. Thus you see," adds Robin Armin, moralizing, "fools have a guess at wit sometimes; and the wisest could have done no more, not so much. But this fat fool fills a lean grave with his carcase; upon which grave the King caused a stone of marble to be put, on which the poet writ these lines in remembrance of him:—

"He that gar'd all men till jeare,
Jemy a Camber, he ligges here:
Pray for his soll, for he is geane,
And here a ligges beneath this steane."

And now let us follow Motley to the English court of the Stuarts, observing by the way, that, in the words of Mr. Thoms, in a note to Mr. Collier's edition of Armin's 'Nest of Ninnies,' "the custom of keeping a fool appears to have prevailed in the Scotch as generally as in any other of the European courts, and, it may be presumed, was retained for a long time among the nobility; since among the curiosities

shown at Glammis Castle, was, within these few years, the dress worn by the domestic fool belonging to the family."

Returning to the court of James the Unwise, I will venture upon the remark, that that British Solomon played the fool, or was played to, more frequently than most monarchs. Not only did the professional jester exercise his vocation to please the King, but astute ambassadors acted folly in order to obtain certain ends, and courtiers turned amateur fools to win his favour.

Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, used to say of James that "his most intrinsic desires were legible on his countenance." Gondomar acted with him accordingly. The Spaniard's manner, we are told by Osborn, was first to disturb the King's passions, "and after, to appease them by some facetious drollery, before he embarked himself in what he intended to make the employment of the present audience."

The same author narrates a scene which took place at New Barnet, and which is illustrative at least of the courtier-fool. James was the guest there of a Mr. John West, in whose garden he was one day walking, after dinner, when he stumbled over a mole-hill, and fell heels above head, in so ridiculous a position that all the courtiers present burst into a fit of laughter. They hastened, however, to assist him; but his Majesty repulsed them, with sundry savoury epithets, in the use and application of which, James was wonderfully expert. The royal rage waxed fiercely; but it was softened down by a touch of humour on the part of the host, which was characteristic of the court fool of an older period. "Ah," so ran the wittily conceited apology of Mr. West, "it is not possible for any good subject to refrain from rejoicing at your Majesty's activity in tumbling over and over at a mole-hill." And with this fool's compliment, the monarch was satisfied.

James undoubtedly enjoyed wit in others besides his professional court jesters, from whom, to tell the truth, he obtained it of a very inferior quality. There was Dean

Field, who was one of the first fellows nominated by the King for the projected Chelsea College; he owed much of his promotion to his wit, and the same may be said of Dr. Collins. L'Estrange narrates an incident exhibiting the punning inclination of their wits in a disputation held by them in the delighted King's presence. They had "promised one another," says Sir Nicholas, "to lay aside all extravagance of wit, and to buckle to a serious argumentation; but they soon violated their own law, for Field began thus—'Sic disputas, Colendissime Collins,' and Collins again to him, afterwards—'Sic disputas, Ager Colende.'

At the court, at which learned men thus trifled, the professional fool often gave offence that was not worth taking, and which indeed the wiser spirits of the court passed by with contempt. We have an instance of this in the case of Stone, whose name has come down to us, through Selden, as a court fool of this reign. The incident shows, too, that the fool's privilege of speech did not always avail him; and that it was the thin-skinned and thick-headed who were the first to take offence, and to call for punishment on the offender. Selden exemplifies this in his 'Table Talk,' with reference to this court fool, Stone. "A gallant man is above ill words, an example we have in the old Lord of Salisbury, who was a great, wise man. Stone had called some Lord about court, 'Fool.' The Lord complains, and has Stone whipt. Stone cries, 'I might have called my Lord of Salisbury, *Fool*, often enough, before *he* would have had me whipt.'" This shows, that if Stone had small wit, he at least possessed some discernment, and could distinguish between a grave, wise Lord, and one who had more sensitiveness than sense. And this is all we know of Stone, whose reputation has been obscured by the brighter and more lasting renown of the celebrated jester, Archie Armstrong.

Archibald Armstrong was a native of Arthuret, in Cumberland, and is supposed to have been "caught up" at an

early age, and attached to the household of King James. Our British King Arthur has left many a memorial of himself in the vicinity of our northern lakes; and the name of the birth-place of the court fool, is one that carries the thoughts back to the most brilliant of legendary sovereigns.

When first we encounter Archy Armstrong at the English court of James, it is rather in the character of buffoon amid fools of nobility, than of witty court jester. Taken altogether, it may be said of him as old Puttenham said of Thersites, that he was "a glorious noddie;" and he was, commonly, in very glorious company.

I have noticed in a previous page that Sir Thomas Jermyn, Sir Ralph Sheldon, and Thomas Badger were spoken of as "fools or buffoons" at the court of James. But Sir Anthony Weldon names three others,—Sir Edward Zouch, Sir George Goring, and Sir John Finett,—as "the chief and master fools; and surely," adds Sir Anthony, "this fooling got them more than any other's wisdom, far above them in desert. There were a set of fiddlers brought up on purpose for this fooling; and Goring was master of the game for fooleries, sometimes presenting David Droman and Archie Armstrong on the backs of the other fools, to tilt one at the other, till they fell together by the ears. But Sir John Millisent, who was never known before, was commended for notable fooling; and he was indeed the best extemporary fool of them all."

Archie was often ill-treated, favourite as he was with James himself. At one time, the friends of Prince Charles, whenever they could catch him, used to toss him, "like a dog," as Armstrong himself said, in a blanket. Osborn asserts that the reason for this treatment was told him by Archie himself. The King and his son, with a gallant company, had been witnessing the sports at Newmarket. When these were concluded, they bade each other farewell, and rode off different ways. The company, almost univer-

sally, turned and accompanied the Prince. Archie remained by his master, to whom he pointed out a circumstance which disagreeably, but conclusively, proved that the popularity of the heir-apparent exceeded that of the reigning Sovereign. The knowledge of this bitter truth, as irrefutable as any told to Lear by *his* fool, moved James to tears. Archie joked at it, but the King wept. The latter was probably also moved to an extensive demonstration of ill-humour, to the great discomfort of the Prince and his friends, otherwise they would not have so repeatedly satisfied their wrath by tossing the court jester in a blanket.

This jester was himself a good-tempered fellow, by no means lacking sense, especially the sense to grow rich by the exercise of his vocation, however contemptible it may have been. His recorded jests, like Scogan's, are poor, unauthenticated, and, except on one or two solitary occasions, do not exhibit him in his character of court fool at all. There is, however, one incident which has been highly praised for its wit, is vouched for by Coke, and repeated by Neale, and which may be told, if it be only to show that it is very apocryphal. It refers to the circumstance of the secret expedition of Charles into Spain. Conversing on this matter with the King, Archie said, "I must change caps with your Majesty." "Why?" asked the King. "Why, who sent the Prince into Spain?" asked Armstrong, in his turn. James, comprehending the fool, said, "But suppose the Prince should come safely back again?" "In that case," replied the jester, "I will take my cap from my head, and send it to the King of Spain."

Now there are several objections to the truth of this incident. One is, that similar stories are told of fools of much earlier times; but objections of far greater weight exist in the fact, that Armstrong himself accompanied the Prince and Buckingham, and Endymion Porter, on their celebrated mad-cap expedition. We have double proof of this in a letter

from Howell, who saw him there, and in one from Archie himself, or written under his dictation, dated from Madrid, and which will be found below, for the first time in print. "Our cousin Archie," thus writes Howell, "hath more privilege than any; for he often goes with his fool's coat when the Infanta is with her *meninas* and ladies of honour, and keeps a blowing and a blustering among them, and flirts out what he lists." The jester was wonderfully bold, it must be confessed, as may be seen by his comment, when the Spanish Dons and Doñas were discussing the gallantry of the Duke of Bavaria, who, with a small force, had routed the much larger army of James's son-in-law, Frederick the Pfalzgraf. "Oh!" cried the patriotic fool, "I will tell you a stranger circumstance. Is it not more singular that one hundred and forty ships should have sailed from Spain to attack England, and that not ten of them should have returned to tell what became of the rest?"

This is very good; but, as I have previously noticed, there is a much more interesting letter from Spain than Howell's, —one from Archie himself. The original (which was kindly pointed out to me by Mr. Hepworth Dixon,) will be found at the British Museum (Additional Manuscripts, 19,402, fol. 79); it is addressed to James I., and is to this effect:—"Most great and gracious King. To let your Majesty know, never was fool better accepted on by the King of Spain, except his own fool; and to tell your Majesty secretly, I am better accepted on than he is. To let your Majesty know, I am sent for by this King when none of your own nor your son's men can come near him,—to the glory of God and praise of you. I shall think myself better and more fool than all the fools here, for aught I see; yet I thank God and Christ my Saviour, and you, for it. Whoever could think that your Majesty kept a gull and an ass in me,—he is a gull and an ass himself. To let your Majesty know, that I cannot tell you the thoughts of kings'

hearts; but this King is of the bravest colour I ever saw, yourself except. And this King will not let me have a *trunchman*. I desire your Majesty's help in all need, for I cannot understand him; but I think myself as wise as he or any in his Court, as grave as you think the Spaniard is. You will write to your son and Buckingham, and charge them to provide me a *trunchman*,* and then you shall know from your fool, by God's help and Christ's help, and the Virgin Mary's, more secret business than from all your wise men here. My Lord Aston,—your Majesty shall give him thanks,—writes to you and to your son; do give him thanks, for never kinder friend I found in this world; his house is at my command, and besides he gave me white boots when my own trunk was not come up. I think every day of yourself, and of your Majesty's gracious favour; for you will never be missed till you are gone, and the child that is unborn will say a praise for you. But I hope in God, for my own part, never to see it. The further I go, the more I see, for all that I see here are foolery to you. For toys and such noise as I see, with God's grace, my Saviour's, and your leave, I will let you know more whenever I come to you; and no more, with grief in my eyes and tears in my heart, and praying for your Majesty's happy and gracious continuance among us. Your Majesty's Servant, Archibald Armstrong, your X best fool of state, both here and there. Court of Spain, 28th April, 1623."

The above letter, with its mixture of blustering familiarity, small wit, and profanity, was probably taken down from the

* "*Trunchman*." In 'Revels at Court,' p. 126, in an account of a "Maske of Amasones" (A.D. 1577), appears a "Troocheman" among the characters represented. At p. 140 we read of a payment made "To Patrochius Ubaldinus, by the Commandment of the Lord Chamberlain, for the translating of certain speeches into Italian, to be used in the mask." I therefore take the "*trunchman*" of Archie, to mean Dragoman, or Interpreter. In Pepys's time the word was written "Druggerman."

dictation of Archie. The fool, it will be observed, appends his *mark;* and the original is entirely in the handwriting of Buckingham. There is in it good illustration of the position occupied by Armstrong; and the letter will, I hope, be considered not superfluous here, for this and other social traits which it contains.

Armstrong returned to England with Prince Charles, into whose regular service he passed, after the death of James. I have said in a previous page, that there were faithful servants of Anne of Denmark who lived to envy her fool; and I may here add that there was one especially who envied him, and who was still more angry when he compared the well-cared-for condition of Archie with his own neglected, despised, and unmerited situation.

The individual to whom I allude is William Belou. According to unpublished documents in the State Paper office relating to the domestic affairs of Charles I., under the dates 1625 and 1626, Belou was a Dane, who, at the age of ten years, was placed in the household of Anne of Denmark by the King of that country, and he accompanied that princess to Scotland. Belou remained in her service till, as he says, it pleased Almighty God to translate her to a better kingdom." He subsequently was an attendant on the person of James I., who granted him an annuity of £150 for life; which, of course, was not paid. "This pension," says Belou, in a memorial to Charles, "being the only mark or testimony of my good behaviour in the late Queen's service, I would not have sold it for £1000 in times past." But the poor pensionary had entered the service of the Duke of Holstein, afterwards of the King of Denmark. He must have been ill requited, for he adds, "I have not only spent my readiest means, but run myself a thousand pounds in debt." Belou then offers to surrender the patent for his annuity, if Charles will "cause my Lord Treasurer give to Charles de Bowsie and Abraham Decks that they shall re-

ceive the moneys above specified that I owe them, at a certain day."

The old servant could get no attention paid to his intercessions; and he came to England, to endeavour to procure by his personal address what he could not obtain by missive. What he did and how he sped, is shown in the subjoined honest, hearty, graphic letter to Mr. Secretary Conway. It is the outpouring of an indignant, but not a disrespectful, discarded servant, "broken in body and mind, and totally ruined in estate." The picture is admirably drawn, and we find in it our old friends Tom Derry and Archie Armstrong, in such conditions of comfort and well-being, as to show that old fools had more substantial respect at the hands of Charles, than old servants, defrauded of their income.

"May it please your Lordship, according to your direction, I have essayed to you a petition, but find neither matter nor reason for it. I have been worse treated than a natural fool, witness Tom Duri,* who, for aught I know, is better used, according to his estate and quality, than any servant the late Queen left behind her; at least a great deal better than I. I have been worse used than a counterfeit, witness Archie Armstrong, who shows me that the King has given so special direction for payment of his entertainment, that he is better than he was in the late King's time; when I, having a pension for which I served, toiled, and travelled the space of thirty-seven years, cannot receive one penny, till I have spent three in seeking of it. I have been worse used than a Turk, witness a Turkish ambassador, whom I have seen get audience of the late King; who had his despatch in three weeks, when I, in three winters' attendance, cannot obtain means or leave to return to my native country, but am constrained to forget and expose my wife and only daughter to rapt and desolation; that bloody inquisition army of

* There can be no doubt, I think, that the Danish writer alludes to our old friend, Tom Derry,

Wallenstein being within three or four days' march of a country-house where I left them. All this I have endured patiently, or at least with a forced and seeming senselessness. But now, my honourable Lord, I am worse used than a dog; for having moved a poor humble petition to the King, verbally, at Hampton Court, that if his Majesty will give me no money, he would let me have a pass or a warrant, that I might go out to put my wife and daughter in a surer place, he went away silently, without one word speaking; and I am sure he will speak to his dogs. Since, then, my Lord, I have fallen beneath the degree of a dog, I can petition no more, for fear I fall a-howling when I would complain. Wherefore, I have enclosed within this letter the copy of two petitions given to his Majesty heretofore. I beseech your Lordship to peruse them again, and consider what I can offer more or demand less than I have done in the said two petitions; and, only by procuring me his Majesty's pass, save me from this last of evils, that it be not saddled on my back as a hedshef of my other wrongs endured, that I have slipped away, like a knotless thread, without his Majesty's knowledge. If I can obtain this, I rest

"Yours, to serve your Lordship with the best thoughts of my heart and the best report my hard fortune can bring forth,

"WILLIAM BELOU.

"*To my very honourable Lord, my Lord Connoway, Secretary of Estate to the King his Majesty of Great Britain, give these.*"

I feel confident that I need not offer any apology for citing the whole of a letter which contains such a graphic sketching of the author's wrongs, of his attempts to redress them, his feelings at his own condition, and his own anxiety for the safety of his wife and only daughter. Charles will "speak to his dogs," but will not vouchsafe a word to

the old servant of his mother, and of his uncle, Ulric of Holstein. The King provides liberally for his mother's jester, Tom Derry, and more than liberally, it would seem, for his father's jester and his own, Archibald Armstrong. When poor Belou is about to open the touching Jeremiad of his afflictions, it is the contrast between the happy positions of the two court fools and his own desolate and destitute situation, which first strikes him. The fools are better off than ever they were, whereas the old attendant of nearly forty years' standing cannot obtain a penny of his due, though he spend three in the seeking of it.

But the day for the fall of Archie Armstrong came too. The fool had not always jested with impunity when he had princes for his subject; and he now fared worse by venturing to tilt against an archbishop. That Archie hated Laud, is sufficiently apparent. It is even said that he once volunteered a *grace* at a dinner where the prelate was present, and that the court fool, trusting in his privilege of speech, gave it forth in the shape of "Great praise be to God, and little *laud* to the Devil!" The Archbishop had good ground for offence; but Archie thrusted at him more sharply than this. What he had told Mr. Belou was no exaggeration; he grew rich at court, but his arrogance brought him low.

> "Archie, by kings and princes graced of late,
> Jested himself into a fair estate;"—

and joked himself out of his enviable position. The attempt to force the English Liturgy upon the Scottish congregations was food for his saucy wit; and when he heard of the orthodox Lizzie, who had flung a stool at the head of the liturgical Dean, in St. Giles's, Edinburgh, he called it "the stool of repentance." The dissensions in the North began to assume a very serious aspect; and much uneasiness, with a corresponding amount of obstinacy, was experienced at court. Laud was, right or wrong

in intention, the cause of all, and as Archie one day met the Archbishop, on his way to the Council Chamber, he could not forbear wagging his rude tongue with the query, "Wha's fool noo?"

For this offence the jester was immediately taken before the King in Council, where the prelate named his grounds of offence, and the fool pleaded the privilege of his coat. He pleaded in vain, as the following order, dated Whitehall, 11th March, 1637, will show:—

"It is this day ordered by his Majesty, with the advice of the board, that Archibald Armstrong, the King's fool, for certain scandalous words of a high nature, spoken by him against the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, his Grace, and proved to be uttered by him, by two witnesses, shall have his coat pulled over his head, and be discharged of the King's service, and banished the court, for which the Lord Chamberlain of the King's household is prayed and required to give order to be executed. And immediately the same was put in execution."

The provocation had been long, and had often driven Laud into fits of unseemly passion, which, indeed, drove the prelate to an attempt to bring the wretched jester before that dreaded tribunal, the Star Chamber. On this quarrel and Laud's vindictiveness, Osborn has a striking passage.

"I shall instance as a blot in the greatest rochet that did in my time appear in the court of England, or indeed any I ever heard of since the Reformation, who managed a quarrel with Archy the King's fool, and by endeavouring to explode him the court, rendered him, at last, so considerable, by calling the Prelate's enemies (which were not a few) to his rescue, as the fellow was not only able to continue the dispute for divers years, but received such encouragement from standers-by as he hath oft, in my hearing, belched in his face such miscarriages as he was really guilty of, and might, but for this foul-mouthed Scot, have been forgotten;

adding such other reproaches of his own as the dignity of his calling and greatness of his parts could not in reason or manners admit; though so far hoodwinked with passion as not to discern that all the fool did was but a symptom, of the strong and inveterate distemper raised long before in the hearts of his countrymen against the calling of bishops, out of whose former ruins, the major part of the Scottish nobility had feathered, if not built, their nests. Nor did this too low-placed anger lead him into a less absurdity than an endeavour to bring him into the Star Chamber, till the Lord Coventry had, by acquainting him with the privilege of a fool, shown the ridiculousness of the attempt; yet, not satisfied, he, through the mediation of the Queen, got him at last discharged the court."*

There were present, on this occasion, when the Council met to strip a coat from a fool, "the King's most excellent Majesty," in person; the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Duke of Lennox, the Marquis of Hamilton, the Earl Marshal, and the Earls of Northumberland and Dorset, Salisbury and Holland, the Lord-Keeper (Finch), the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Privy Seal, and the Lord Chamberlain; Baron Newburgh, and Mr. Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller, Mr. Vice-Chamberlain, Mr. Secretary Cook, and Mr. Secretary Winccbanke." What an august tribunal for the deposition of a fool!

Archy survived long enough to see himself avenged (if he were sufficiently of evil nature to consider himself to require to be avenged) of many of these his noble enemies. Meanwhile, his crime seems to have sat lightly on his conscience, however heavy the retribution with which it was visited. The discarded jester did not attempt to deny his offence. How he was punished and how he spoke openly of it, is shown in the paragraph here subjoined.

* In the 'Scout's Discovery' it is said that Archie himself pleaded before the Star Chamber his privileges of coat. "For," said he, "if neither fool nor wise man may escape this court, I will be neither."

"Archye," writes Mr. Garrard to Lord Strafford (Strafford Papers, vol. ii.), "is fallen into a great misfortune; a fool he would be, but a foul-mouthed knave he hath proved himself; being at a tavern in Westminster, drunk, as he saith himself, he was speaking of the Scottish business, he fell a railing of my Lord of Canterbury, said he was a monk, a rogue, and a traitor. Of this, his Grace complained at Council, and the King being present, it was ordered he should be carried to the porter's lodge, his coat pulled over his ears, and kicked out of the Court, never to enter within the gates, and to be called into the Star Chamber. The first part is done, but my Lord of Canterbury hath interceded for the King that there it should end."

Laud would have had more vengeance, if he could, but, says the author of the 'Scout's Discovery,'—"albeit Archie found favour in his lash, he lost both his coat and his place." Laud ruined the jester; but he could not subdue his spirit, nor curb his tongue. Archie assumed a suit of sables, and hung about the dead Kings in Westminster Abbey, since he no longer held office in the palace of a living sovereign. "I met Archie," says a writer in Morgan's 'Phœnix Britannicus,' referring to a week or two after the dismissal,—"I met Archie at the Abbey, all in black. Alas! poor fool, thought I, he mourns for his country. I asked him about his (fool's) coat. 'Oh,' quoth he, 'my Lord of Canterbury hath taken it from me, because either he or some of the Scots bishops may have the use of it themselves. But he hath given me a black coat for it; and now I may speak what I please, so it be not against the prelates, for this coat hath a greater privilege than the other had.'" The hint that he could exercise the privilege of a jester's liberty under the clerical black more freely than he could beneath his motley jerkin, was a Parthian dart thrown by a practised though a retreating soldier. It is certainly not the worst saying ever uttered by Archibald Armstrong.

It will be seen, too, that Archie, whether in or out of office, had the wit to thrive. Dr. Octavius Gilchrist, in the 'London Magazine' for August and September, 1824, at the conclusion of a review of the old jest book which bore Armstrong's name on the title-page; but with which the "fool" had no other connection, states that Archie derived considerable wealth from the new year's gifts presented him by the courtiers. It even seems that the ex-jester became a landed proprietor. "To prove," says Dr. Gilchrist, "that he saved money and laid it out in the purchase of landed property, we have met with a contemporary authority, in an uncommonly rare tract, printed in 12mo, 1636, and entitled 'The Fatal Nuptials, or Mournful Marriage.' This is a metrical account of a lamentable accident that occurred in the preceding year, on Windermere Water, when forty-seven persons (among them a young married couple, with their friends and relations going to keep their wedding) were drowned. The anonymous poet (a very bad one, by the way), meaning to enforce the uncertainty of life, and the liability of all ranks to a similar disaster, introduces Archie, who was probably well known in the neighbourhood of the accident.

> "Is 't so, that we in hourly danger stand,
> Whether we sail by sea, or go by land?
> That we to this world but one entrance have,
> But thousand means of passage to the grave?
> And that the wise shall no more fruit receive
> Of all his labours than the fool shall have.
> For the politick Hum must yield to swelling Humber,
> As well as the least of his inferior number,
> *And Archie, that rich fool, when he least dreams,*
> *For purchased lands must be possessed of streams.*"

It is tolerably clear, from this, that Armstrong, like Osric, that combination of fool and lord in Hamlet, was of those enviable and respectable people who may be described, as Osric is, in the same tragedy, as being "spacious in the possession of dirt;" or, as the Latin author said it long before, "multâ dives tellure."

In short, Archie, saving his disgrace, did not fare so ill. He was in the happy financial condition of the gentleman in Horace, who, let the world rail at him as it might, could point to his money-box, and hug himself complacently on his destiny. He had noble companionship, too, in his retirement. Armstrong repaired to Arthuret, his native place, in Cumberland, and thither also retired, after the cause of Archie's royal ex-master had become desperate, that Dick Graham who had been master of the horse to Buckingham, and who had accompanied his patron in that expedition to the Spanish Court where the Jester had played as prominent a part as any of his betters. Had the ex-jester been of the quality of mind of illogical persons who see in every disaster that befalls those with whom they are in antagonism, a divine justice descending on the head of their enemy, Archie might have solemnly declared that the monarchy fell because it had ceased to respect the privileges of fools.

But it was not Armstrong's disposition to be solemn. While institutions decayed, he survived. The Monarchy went down, and the Commonwealth went over it, and went down too, and Archie still found himself upon his legs. The church-register of Arthuret, as quoted by Lysons, in his Magna Britannia, shows that the jester could find damsels too ready to be fooled by him. But let us hope that the joculator of old turned honest man at last. One thing is certain, that in 1646 he made an honest woman, as the old phrase goes, of confiding Sibella Bell. The church-register makes record of the marriage of this pair; but neither in that nor any other register is record made of the lives led by this wedded couple. The only further, and *that* an important, entry, containing a notice of our once lively friend of the cap and bells, is the duly-registered circumstance of his death. The date of his burial alone is given, and that ceremony took place, characteristically enough, (in the year above-mentioned) on April 1, All-fools' day!

To Archie Armstrong succeeded Muckle John, the last, perhaps, of the official court fools in England. In the Strafford Papers (vol. ii. p. 154) there is a letter from Mr. Garrard to Lord Strafford, in which the latter is informed, "There is now a fool in his (Archie's) place, Muckle John, but he will never be so rich, for he cannot abide money." Love of the precious metals was, indeed, a passion with Armstrong, whose avarice, however, was sometimes disappointed. It was especially so on an occasion when a nobleman placed in Archie's hand some pieces of money which the jester thought too little for his merits; he expressed his discontent, and the donor, seeming willing to change the silver coin for gold, received it from Archie, but put it into his own pocket. Instead of giving a gold Carolus or two in return, the courtier only bestowed on Armstrong the remark, that whatever wit he might possess as fool, he certainly had not the wit to know how to keep money when it was given to him. Muckle John was of a different quality, inasmuch that he cared nothing at all for money; of which, nevertheless, considerable sums were spent upon him, to make him look like a fool of quality. For the following items of expenses in this respect, extracted from an account-book of the period, I am indebted to Mr. Peter Cunningham, whose ready kindness enables me to show Muckle John equipped from head to foot.

"A long coat and suit of scarlet-colour serge for Muckle John, 10*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

"One pair of crimson silk hose, and one pair of gaiters and roses for Muckle John, 61*s.*

"For a pair of silk and silver garters, and roses and gloves suitable for Muckle John, 110*s.*

"For a hat covered with scarlet, and a band suitable; and for two rich feathers, one red, the other white, for Muckle John, 50*s.*

"Stags'-leather gloves, fringed with gold and silver.

"A hat-band for Muckle John.

"One pair of perfumed gloves, lined with sables, 5*s*."

At the court at which Armstrong and Muckle John practised their vocation, there were other personages of some notoriety, who exercised their talents for the mirth or admiration of their royal patron. While the above-named jesters, for instance, were more particularly attached to the King, little Jeffrey Hudson, the dwarf, exercised a calling somewhat similar in the household of Henrietta Maria. Jeffrey did this both in England and in France. This little fellow, who, when he entered his teens, was scarcely more than a foot and a half in height, and who did not ultimately grow much over three feet, was in his boyhood protected by the Duke of Buckingham. At a banquet given by the Duke in honour of the Queen, a pie was placed upon the table, the crust of which being raised, the dwarf stepped forth and bowed to Henrietta Maria, to whom he was presented by Buckingham. This mode of presentation was not at all original. It was a common court jest, when a dwarf was in question. Sometimes the hapless little wretch was presented in a gilt cage, as a Milan dwarf was to Francis I. Zeiller, in one of his letters, mentions a dwarf in the household of Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, in the year 1568. At a grand festival in honour of Duke William of Bavaria and the Princess Renata of Lorraine, this dwarf was served up at table, in a pie. When the crust was raised, he leaped out, attired in panoply of gilt, and grasping a banner in his hand, which he waved as he marched round the table, and made merry compliments to the august and delighted guests. Weber, in his 'Verändertes Russland,' notices a similar custom as prevailing at the Court of Russia, and continuing as late as the beginning of the last century. No more acceptable joke could be got up for the amusement of the Czars by their favourite nobles. A couple of pies, from which a male and female dwarf

issued to dance a minuet, procured for the giver of the entertainment the utmost applause from the sovereign.

The custom, then, was known on the Continent both before and after the period of Jeffrey Hudson. That the position of the latter in the household of his royal mistress was not unlike that of a jester, may be gathered from various sources. Davenant says that he was made to fight with a turkey-cock, and Walter Scott notices how he was compelled to endure the teazing of the domestics and courtiers, and the many squabbles he had with the King's gigantic porter.

But where Jeffrey Hudson is best seen in his character of jester to Henrietta Maria, is in the despatches written in 1636, by Panzani and Corneo, agents of the Romish Church, in London, and addressed to Cardinal Mazarin, These despatches are quoted by Mrs. Everett Green, in her 'Letters of Henrietta Maria,' and it is there I find a notice of our little friend, Jeffrey. In the despatch in which mention is made of Hudson, the writer, Corneo, describes an interview he had with the Queen at Holmby Palace, near Northampton. He narrates the compliments exchanged by the principal personages, and proceeds to tell in much detail, how he presented to Henrietta Maria, as a Papal gift, a shrine for relics, and how gratefully it was received. Corneo then says, "that he exhibited to her Majesty a portrait of St. Catherine, with an intimation that as soon as he had procured a frame for it, he would offer it for the Queen's acceptance." The Queen was too impatient to wait, and therefore took the picture as it was, and had it fastened to the curtains of her bed. Nor was this all. On the following day there were more gifts for presentation, and at this ceremony we find Jeffrey in waiting, and exercising his licensed vocation. "I presented to her Majesty," says the agent, "your Eminence's rosary of olive wood, with another of agate, and one of buffalo horn, curiously worked with cameo medallions. I also took others to the

Catholic ladies and maidens, which were distributed by Father Philip, in her Majesty's presence; and the Queen's dwarf, who is less and better made than that of Criqui, being present, when all was nearly finished, began to call out, "Madam, show the father that I also am a Catholic," with a manner and gesture that made all laugh. This was evidently the manner and gesture of a court buffoon; and what would have been resented from a noble as an impertinence, was laughed at, in the Queen's dwarf, as a good joke.

Eight years subsequently to the above scene, when Jeffrey (after cleverly aiding the Queen's escape from Exeter) was with Henrietta Maria, in France, occurred his remarkable duel with Will Croft, brother of the Queen's favourite, and master of the horse. Will Croft had bantered the valiant little man, who held a commission as a cavalry captain; and Jeffrey not only challenged him, but fought Will on horseback, in the park at Nevers. Croft had brought with him only a squirt, which he discharged at the enraged dwarf; but Hudson, "running his horse in full career, shot his antagonist in the head, and left him dead on the spot." This affair caused some sensation in the French court, and it produced from Henrietta Maria a very characteristic note to Mazarin, whom she honours with a complimentary title. "Cousin," she writes from Nevers, in October, 1644, "I wrote to the Queen, my sister, about a misfortune which has happened to my house, of Geoffrey, who has killed Croft's brother. I have written the whole affair to the commander, in order that you may hear of it. What I wish is, that as they are both English, and my servants, the Queen, my sister, will give me authority to dispose of them as I please, in dispensing either justice or favour, which I was unwilling to do without writing to you, and asking you to assist me therein, as I shall always do in all that concerns me, since I profess to be, as I am, Cousin, your very affectionate cousin, Henrietta Maria, R."

The Queen's letter, as given by Mrs. Green, differs from that given by Miss Strickland in this lady's life of Henrietta Maria. With regard to the consequences of the affair noticed in it, there only remains to be said, that poor Jeffrey lost his post in the Queen's household. He recovered some favour at the court of Charles II.; but he fell under suspicion of treason, and the dwarf, who had been the faithful messenger of his patroness, had served her well in serious affairs of business, and made her and her court laugh by his small jests, ultimately died, a prisoner, in the Gate House, at Westminster.

Poor Jeffrey was less fortunate than two other dwarfs, patronized by Henrietta previous to her flight to France. They were a male and female. The former, Richard Gibson, had been in the service of a lady at Mortlake. She had observed in him a talent for drawing, and she kindly placed him with De Cleyn, director of the Mortlake tapestry works. Gibson acquired great reputation as a copier of Sir Peter Lely's portraits, whose collection his nephew, William Gibson, was rich enough to purchase at Lely's death. The dwarf artist was ever welcome at court; and when he espoused the dwarf young lady there, the nuptials of the little couple were honoured by the presence of Charles I. and Henrietta Maria. No less a bard than Edmund Waller sang their Epithalamium, or at least verses in commemoration of an event which made the court hilarious, and from which verses the following lines are taken:—

"Design or chance makes others wive,
But nature did this match contrive. . . .
Thrice happy is that humble pair,
Beneath the level of all care!
Over whose heads those arrows fly,
Of sad distrust and jealousy;
Secured in as high extreme
As if the world had none but them.

> To him, the fairest nymphs do show
> Like moving mountains topp'd with snow;
> And every man a Polypheme
> Does to his Galatea seem. . . ."

Thus, although this couple did not belong to the fraternity of official jesters, the sovereigns and their court contrived to extract amusement from the neat little wedded pair, each of whom measured exactly three feet two. Richard Gibson was the King's page, and his wife served the Queen. When King and Queen had passed away, the dwarf artist found in his pencil a better property than Charles had found, or lost, in his sceptre. He had painted his Royal master's portrait; and when Oliver Cromwell was in power, he painted the Protector. He was the drawing-master of the Princesses Mary and Anne, and it may be remarked that, about the same period, the Muscovite court fool and dwarf, Sotof, was holding the additional office of writing-master to Peter the Great. The old page of Charles I. was however a superior man. He died at the age of seventy-five, A.D. 1690. His little wife lived till 1709, when she died, in her ninetieth year, at which time the four of their nine children who had attained to the ordinary stature of mankind survived, the issue of a marriage which had been honoured by the presence of royalty and commemorated as a court jest by the banter of Waller.

It is not to be expected that the grave system of the Commonwealth admitted of such an official as a jester. The house or town fool, however, did not go out with his brother at court. A portrait of one of those worthies may be seen at Muncaster Castle, Cumberland. His name was Thomas Skelton; he appears to have resided at the castle during the period of the civil wars, as house fool. Jefferson, in his 'History of Allerdale Ward, above Derwent,' says, that "of Skelton's sayings there are many traditional stories;" but unfortunately he cites none. From his descrip-

tion of the portrait on the staircase at the castle, we obtain a good idea of the fool of this period. Skelton is there represented "in a check gown, blue, yellow, and white; under his arm is an earthen dish, with ears; in his right hand a white wand; in his left, a white hat, bound with pink ribbon, and with blue bows; in front, a paper, on which is written, 'Mrs. Dorothy Copeland.'" The picture contains an inscription, headed "Thomas Skelton, late fool of Muncaster's last will and testament." I cite it, not for its poetical merit, but because it shows that these house and town fools were sometimes invested with mock offices of a certain dignity.

"Be it known to ye, O grave and wise men all,
That I, Tom Fool, am sheriff of the Hall.
I mean the Hall of Haigh, where I command
What neither I nor you do understand.
My under-sheriff is Ralph Wayte, you know;
As wise as I am, and as witty too.
Of Egremond I have borough-serjeant been;
Of Wiggan, bailiff too, as may be seen
By my white staff of office in my hand,
Being carried straight as the badge of my command.
A low high-constable, too, was once my calling,
Which I enjoy'd under King Henry Rawling.
And when the Fates a new sheriff send,
I'm under-sheriff prick'd, world without end.
He who doth question my authority
May see the seal and patent here lie by.
The dish with lugs [*ears*] which I do carry here
Shows all my living is in good strong beer.
If scurvy lads to me abuses do,
I'll call 'em scurvy rogues, and rascals too.
Fair Dolly Copeland in my cap is placed;
Monstrous fair is she, and as good as all the rest.
Honest Nick Pennington, honest Tom Turner, both
Will bury me when I this world go forth.
But let me not be carried o'er the brigg,
Lest, falling, I in Duggas river ligg.

Nor let my body by old Charnorth lie,
But by Will Caddy,—for he'll lie quietly.
And when I'm buried, then my friends may drink;
But each man pay for himself,—that's best I think.
This is my will; and this I know will be
Perform'd by them, as they have promised me."

This rhapsodic testament has "Thomas Skelton × his mark" affixed to it, serving to show (as Armstrong's letter from Madrid does) that this class of jester, if possessed of wit, was not possessed of learning. The lines also intimate that the "fool of Muncaster Castle" was, like most of his profession, fond of drinking. The subscription of his mark is attested by three witnesses; and the rhymed joke had all the forms of a serious document.

After the gravity enforced by the Commonwealth, the silencing of the stage, the suppression of joking, and the introduction of long sermons and loud psalms, there was a sudden reaction, even before the graceless King had got what was facetiously called "his own again." Monk, who was in some doubt, even as he marched through Gray's Inn Lane into London, whether he should join hands with the solemn precisians or the gay cavaliers, no sooner felt the direction of the popular wind, than he gave license to jollity. The nearest approach that could be made to the old professional fool, started on to the stage as "The Citizen and Soldier," "Country Tom and City Dick," and other "pretty antics," played in April 1660, before "His Excellency," when, with the Council of State, he dined at one of the city halls. He dined at nine of them; and after dinner on each occasion, besides satirical plays, were "dancing and singing, many shapes and ghosts, and the like; and all to please his Excellency, the Lord General."

If it be true that the official fool was not restored with Monarchy, at the accession of Charles II., because the Puritan voice and the religious sentiment of the country

generally, were against such officials and their foolery, foolery itself did not go out. See what solemn Evelyn says to it, under the date of January 1, 1661–2:—"1st January. I went to London, invited to the solemn foolery of the Prince de la Grange, at Lincoln's Inn, where came the King, Duke, etc. It began with a grand masque, and a formal pleading before the mock princes, grandees, nobles, and knights of the Sun. He had his Lord Chancellor, Chamberlain, Treasurer, and other royal officers, gloriously clad and attended. It ended in a magnificent banquet. One Mr. Lort was the young spark who maintained the pageantry."

A little more than six years later, we meet with an entry in 'Pepys' Diary' which seems to introduce us to an official fool, and which is to this effect:—"1667–8. Feb. 13. Mr. Brisband tells me, in discourse, that Tom Killigrew hath a fee out of the Wardrobe for cap and bells, under the title of the King's Foole or Jester, and may revile or jeere anybody, the greatest person, without offence, by the privilege of his place."—Pepys, vol. iv. p. 353.

Oldys is quite as explicit. In one of his MS. notes to 'Langbain's Memoirs of Dramatic Authors,' he says, under the head of Killigrew: "He was Master of the Revels, and the King's jester, while Groom of the Bedchamber." Various writers, when commenting on these passages, have suggested that Killigrew never held a patent of official fool, and that his actual appointment was to the office of Master of the Revels. According, however, to Chalmers, Tom Killigrew succeeded Herbert as Master of the Revels in 1673, and was followed therein, on his death, in 1682–3, by his brother Charles. The office in question was first instituted in 1546, the last year of Henry VIII. (with a salary of £10 per annum), and continued till 1725, when the Lord Chamberlain was empowered to have rule and dominion over the court and public entertainments; and the Master of the

Revels being entirely ignored in a new Act of Parliament, was snuffed out, and never heard of again.

Supposing Pepys's informant to have stated the actual truth, Tom Killigrew had, not a patent, but a warrant under the King's sign manual, addressed to the officers of the Wardrobe, directing them to pay to Killigrew, "our fool or jester," a certain amount per annum to enable him to provide the customary official indication of a cap and bells. Such warrants had nothing in them of the character of Letters Patent. An entry of the warrant should have been made in some book kept in the Wardrobe; the warrant or sign manual may have been preserved, and probably also a docket, or short minute of it, may have been made and kept by some Master of Requests or other officer who laid the warrant before the King for his signature. If such a warrant did actually exist, it ought to be found in some wardrobe book, or collection of signed bills or warrants, or dockets.

The most careful research has failed to be rewarded by the discovery of any document confirmatory of the report conveyed to Pepys. All that I could find in conjunction with Mr. Bruce, or, I should rather say, all that his antiquarian zeal, patience, curiosity, and unwearied good-nature could find for me, consisted of several entries which show that Killigrew was in the receipt of various payments made by the Crown; but none of these show him to have been an official court jester. The only approach to a proof is, that he is styled "one of the Grooms of the Chamber," a style by which Tarleton was designated when he was jester to Elizabeth.

On the Issue Roll, 1 March, 1665-6, there is notice of a payment of £100, being a quarter's annuity granted to Killigrew and Cecilie, his wife. In 1666, the same Roll contains notices of payments on account of two annuities, one of £400 per annum, which he held jointly with his wife;

and one of the annual value of £500. These annuities are duly ordered to be paid, at later dates, and from various sources. Sometimes there were no effects in the treasury, and then the Queen's purse seems to have been tapped for the payment. In the Pells Enrolments, 1675, Killigrew receives £200, to be expended by him in support of his office as Master of the Revels; and, later, we come upon an entry of £1050, to be paid to him for getting up certain plays during the preceding nine years. I may add, that in a succeeding year, the 18th of August, 1678, there was another appointment of greater interest than the above, and which shows how different, now at least, was the court poet from the court fool. I allude to the appointment of Dryden as poet laureate. The letters patent making this appointment are entered on the Pells Book of Enrolments of the date above mentioned. In this document, Dryden's predecessors, Gower and Chaucer, are spoken of as knights; the salary is fixed at £200 per annum; and directions are given that the butt of canary, or sack, shall be taken out of the King's cellars at Whitehall, "yearly, and once a year." At the above date, Killigrew was Master of the Revels; and if he were jester also, it may be said that the court of England had never seen so accomplished a "fool," nor so eminent a laureate, as now figured on the household roll of Charles II.

The position of Tom Killigrew at Court was, however, so closely allied to that of the official jester, as to forbid its being passed over without some brief notice. Killigrew was the son of a baronet; and his earliest vocation and amusement, was that of lingering about the doors of the theatre till he was invited in to play some imp, or any other character that a boy could enact. In this way he commenced a career which ended in his being, with Buckingham and others, one of the "merry villains" in the household of Charles II.

Killigrew's first appearance at Court was in the character

of page of honour to Charles I., a part which he seems to have filled creditably. When the Commonwealth was established, Tom went into the service of Charles II., then on the Continent; and he is very strongly suspected of having betrayed his master's secrets to the republican Government. This suspicion rests upon a passage in a letter (dated October 1658) from Downing, Cromwell's Resident at the Hague, to Thurloe, referring to a secret visit paid by Charles to the Dutch court. "As for Charles Stuart," says the writer, "I had an account from one Killigrew, of his bedchamber, of every place where he was, and the time, with his stay and company, of which also I gave you an account in mine of the last post. He vowed that it was a journey of pleasure, and that none of the States General, nor any person of note of Amsterdam, came to him." These communications, however, may have been made by Killigrew in good faith, as explanations, in order to screen his royal master from molestation.

Of that royal master he was the not unfitting representative at Venice, whither Killigrew repaired to borrow money, and where he remained long enough to write some half-dozen verbose and witless plays. He remained too long for the patience of the Venetians, who, dissolute as they were themselves, were more disgusted at the profligacy, than charmed by the accomplishments, of the English envoy; and the Doge, Francis Erizzo, very unceremoniously ejected him from the Venetian territory. In the fourth volume of 'Evelyn's Diary and Correspondence' will be found a letter from Hyde, mildly complaining that Charles was not permitted to withdraw his ambassador.

Killigrew, at the Restoration, brought back with him an improved taste in theatrical matters generally; and he introduced the first Italian opera singers ever heard in this country. He was for a time the most conspicuous man at court, where he certainly exercised with impunity all the

license of the court fool, which office Oldys and Pepys ascribe to him. The samples of this license are well known, but some will bear being reproduced.

On one occasion, this "merry villain" was seated at a window of the King's dressing-room, reading one of his licentious plays, while Charles was engaged at his toilette. The monarch must have been under the influence of some decency of spirit that morning, for he asked Killigrew what he would be able to say in the next world, in defence of the "idle words" of his comedies. Tom replied, that he would be able to make a better defence for his "idle words" than the King could do for his idle promises, which were made only to be broken, and which had caused more ruin than any of the aforesaid idle words in any of his own comedies.

Of similar boldness, and with more of truth in it, was his satirical hint to Charles, conveyed publicly to the King, at a moment of great national distress. Killigrew remarked that the affairs of the kingdom were in a very ill state; but that nevertheless they were not without remedy. "There is a good, honest, able man that I could name," said he, "that if your Majesty would employ, and command to see all things well executed, all things would be soon mended; and this is one Charles Stuart, who now spends his time in employing his lips about the court, and hath no other employment; but if you would give him this employment, he were the fittest man in the world to perform it."

The jester, turned Mentor, was ever more ready with precept than example; and his own practice of selling places that did not exist, and taking money from honest and ambitious citizens for creating them "King's physic-tasters," or "royal curtain-drawers," was thought an excellent court jest, and was laughed at accordingly.

Sometimes, like Will Sommers before Henry VIII., Killigrew would appear in the presence of Charles, in disguise. Once he came before the King in pilgrim's attire, "cockled hat

and shoon." "Whither away?" asked Charles. "I am going to hell," boldly replied the jester, "to ask the devil to send back Oliver Cromwell to take charge of the affairs of England; for as to his successor, he is always employed in other business." It will be seen from this, that if Killigrew did not wear the cap and bells, he was in all essentials the bold, witty, and privileged jester of the court of Charles II.

Tom could bring the latter to attend to his affairs when no one else had hope of succeeding. We have an instance of this when a Council had assembled on some highly important matter, but could do nothing for want of the King's much-desired presence. When Lauderdale had failed to induce the King to leave his pleasures for the public business, Killigrew wagered a hundred pounds with the Duke, that *he* would bring Charles to the Council in half-an-hour. Tom succeeded too. He simply suggested to the King, that as his Majesty hated Lauderdale, he might now get rid of him for ever. "If I win my wager, the Duke will rather hang himself than pay the money." "Well then," said Charles, "if that be the case, I positively will go." And so merry villain and merry monarch proceeded straight to the Council Chamber.

Pepys calls Killigrew "a merry droll, but a gentleman of great esteem with the King." When the immortal diarist was in the Admiralty yacht, off the coast of Holland, in 1660, among the "persons of honour" also there, Killigrew is named. "He told us many merry stories," says Pepys; "one, how he wrote a letter three or four days ago to the Princess Royal, about a Queen Dowager of Judea and Palestine, that was at the Hague *incognita*, that made love to the King, which was Mr. Cary (a courtier's) wife, that had been a nun, who are all married to Jesus." Two years later, when the clerk met the courtier at the Tower, the former designates the wit of the jester as consisting of "poor and frothy discourse."

In February, 1666–7, Killigrew narrated to Pepys what he had done, since he was a manager, for the improvement of the stage; rendering it "a thousand times better and more glorious than ever heretofore. Now, wax-candles, and many of them; then, not above 3lbs. of tallow. Now, all things civil, no rudeness anywhere; then, as a bear-garden. Then, two or three fiddlers; now, nine or ten of the best: then, nothing but rushes on the ground, and everything else mean; now, all otherwise." It was in the following year that Killigrew is said to have received his fee for the purchase of his cap and bells. What is more certain is, that in the last year named, he and gentlemen of similar mirthful quality relieved the depression of their spirits at Sir Thomas Teddiman's funeral, by reading aloud, or listening to, a variety of comic ballads! The respect which Killigrew received at the hands of Rochester, appears to have been exactly that which an over-bold fool might win from a courtier equally-proud and dissolute. It was for some fool's offence given at a banquet at the Dutch Ambassador's, at which the King himself was present, that Rochester dealt the saucy wit a stinging smack on the face. Tom took it as Tom Derry might have taken a cuff from a Lord; and Rochester lost no favour with the King for having thus assaulted one of his Majesty's "merry villains." Killigrew died in March 1682. Evelyn records in his Diary, the execution of Vrats, the murderer, who believed that "God would deal with him like a gentleman;" but he leaves Tom's departure from the festive scene unhonoured by a word of remark.

Shadwell writes, in his 'Woman Captain,' anno 1680:— "It is out of fashion now, for great men to keep fools;" but though princes and nobles began to prefer the society of witty and intellectual gentlemen to the paid-for nonsense of hirelings who were said, by periphrasis, to have been born at Little Witham, the old taste did not entirely ex-

pire either at court or in private households. Anthony à Wood mentions Dr. John Donne, son of the celebrated Donne, as "an atheistical buffoon, a banterer, and a person of over-free thought; yet valued by Charles the Second." The court of this monarch assuredly little resembled that of his contemporary sovereign, the King of Siam, touching which, Captain Erwin told Pepys (17th August, 1666), "how the King of Syam seldom goes out without thirty or forty thousand people with him, and not a word spoke, nor a hum or a cough in the whole company to be heard." In other respects, the difference does not seem to have been remarkable, for the Captain was assured by a native interpreter, that "our (the Siamese) King do not live by meat or drink, but by having great lies told him." The reign of James II. is barren, as far as it is in connection with the subject I pursue; and it is tolerably certain that throughout the reign of William III., the only official court fool in England was the one who came over in the suite of the Czar Peter. His presence marked the distinction then existing between a civilized and intellectual, and an uncivilized and ignorant court.

I must not omit, however, to relate an incident of this reign in connection with the subject of the license of the fool. If the latter official was not to be found at court, his representatives still lingered in the fairs, and exercised a privilege which the Royal authority, nevertheless, was not slow to oppose. In 1693, the magnificent Smyrna fleet set sail from our shores, under convoy of a squadron of English and Dutch men-of-war, at the head of which were Killigrew, Delaval, and Rooke. The first two abandoned the last admiral; and Rooke, left to encounter the whole maritime force of France in the Bay of Lagos, suffered severe loss, and the rich Smyrna fleet (with some exceptions) was scattered, sunk, burnt, or otherwise destroyed. This catastrophe, the return of the first two

admirals to Torbay, and the disaster to "the Turkey fleet," excited mingled indignation and grief. As the fool of the French King Philip made use of the defeat of the French fleet by the navy of Edward, whereon to exercise his wit and rouse the patriotic anger of his master, so now the fools and merry-andrews congregated at Bartholomew fair, in the vicinity of the edifice where Rahere the jester had founded a Priory in honour of the Apostle, made use of the public dishonour and loss, in order to keep alive the popular execration against those wretched and incapable ministers, to whose incapacity and indifference might be traced the fearful loss of life, property, and good name incurred by England on the fatal day in question. On Saturday, September 2, 1693, Narcissus Luttrell writes, in his Diary:—"A merry-andrew in Bartholomew fair is committed for telling the mobb news that our fleet was come into Torbay, being forced in by some French privateers; and other words reflecting on the conduct of great Ministers of State." Lord Macaulay founds, on a paragraph in L'Hermitage of the same date, a very graphic description of this attempt of the fool at fairs, to wag his tongue as boldly as his predecessors used to do at court. Of all the shows at this period, says the historian, "none proved so attractive as a dramatic performance which, in conception, though doubtless not in execution, seems to have borne much resemblance to those immortal master-pieces of humour, in which Aristophanes held up Cleon and Lamachus to derision. Two strollers personated Killigrew and Delaval. The admirals were represented as flying with their whole fleet before a few French privateers, and taking shelter under the guns of the Tower. The office of Chorus was performed by a Jack Pudding, who expressed very freely his opinion of the naval administration. Immense crowds flocked to see this strange farce. The applauses were loud; the receipts were great; and the mountebanks, who had at first

ventured to attack only the unlucky and unpopular Board of Admiralty, now emboldened by impunity and success, and probably prompted and rewarded by persons of much higher station than their own, began to cast reflections on other departments of the Government. This attempt to revive the license of the Attic stage was soon brought to a close by the appearance of a strong body of constables, who carried off the actors to prison."

Thus was suppressed an attempt, less to revive than to continue the license of the jester. Government had become less tolerant in this respect than Kings had been to their own fools. A dozen years before, an essay to joke down the administrative foibles of the day, by a pamphleteering jester, "Heraclitus Ridens," was very summarily and stringently punished. Bartholomew fair, however, struggled hard to maintain its supposed privileges. It is very possible that if persons of high station employed the merry-andrews of 1693, to spout their fun against elevated Ministers of State, that they were also present to hear how their agents acquitted themselves of the office. Nothing was more common than the presence of the nobility at the Saturnalia in Smithfield, except the presence of the "mobile," with whom the former frequently came in sanguinary contact. In September, 1690, Luttrell writes:— "The first instant was a great disorder at Bartholomew fair, where the mobile got ahead, and quarrelled with some gentlemen, upon which, swords were drawn, where some were wounded, and one or two killed." Even as late as the reign of George II., the fair was patronized by an august presence. Frederick, Prince of Wales, used to go there by night, attended by a merry suit of courtiers of either sex. The theatres were then closed, and "their Majesties' servants" played in booths. Princes now went to see the "drolls;" whereas, in former times the clowns waited on the princes.

Before this last period, Queen Anne may be said to have had some of the old leaven in her; for she made a Knight of William Read, a mountebank. Her Majesty, also, offered to knight Beau Nash, a buffoon too, according to the fashion of the times; but the Beau had declined the honour at the hands of the great Nassau, and he would not take it from Anne. His reply was in the bad court-jester style: "I will have none of it, most gracious Madam," said Nash, as if he were refusing to grant a favour; "but there is Sir William Read, the mountebank, whom your Majesty has knighted,—I shall be very happy to call him Brother." At which fool's sally, "the solemn Anna smiled."

But if the official fool had gone out, foolish officers still exercised a silly vocation at court. Perhaps the most silly of these was the King's cock-crower, who was still loud and lusty, at the opening of the Georgian era. This personage crowed at each hour of the night. On the first Ash-Wednesday which occurred after the accession of the Hanoverian family, the Prince of Wales (subsequently George II.) supped at court. Just as ten o'clock struck, his Majesty's cock-crower, who happened to be behind the Prince, set up such a chanticleering, that the Prince started up in indignation at what he deemed a fool's insult. The courtiers had some difficulty in assuring him that the crowing and crower formed part of the ordinary court etiquette. The Prince would not tolerate such a nuisance, and another fool's office was annihilated when he came to the throne.

There were still some wits, however, in whom the popular voice hailed an arch-jester. I may notice one, whose very grave is likely soon to be forgotten. In the old cemetery (belonging to St. Clement's Danes), in Portugal-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, in a grave, the head-stone of which was during many summers, until recently, regularly embowered and concealed by sun-flowers, lie the remains of the witty jester, Joe Miller. There they have been since

1738. The year following, John Mottley, the author of 'Peter the Great,' published a collection of jests as honest Joe's, but they were really a collection of witty things which in his time he had either heard or read, and to which Mottley appended Miller's name. The latter died at the age of fifty-four, the exact age at which departed so recently from among us, he who held the "consulship of wit," in England,—Douglas Jerrold. That Miller was "facetious," we learn from the inscription above his grave; that he was witty also, his jest not merely turning on a pun, but on a chain of ideas, the following will testify. He was once sitting in the parlour of the Sun Tavern, in Clare-street, or the Black Jack, in Portsmouth-street, his favourite houses, when a fishwoman passed by, crying "Buy my soles! buy my maids!"—"Ah, you wicked old creature!" said Joe to her, "are you not contented to sell your own soul, but you must sell your maid's too?"

In the reigns of George II. and his successor, among the men who seem to have united with other offices, something like the vocation of court fool, was the son of a Carlisle apothecary, named Bubb, who succeeded to the estates and adopted the name of his uncle, Doddington; and who is better known by their conjoined names, than by his subsequent title of Lord Melcombe. A disappointment in obtaining a peerage, took him from the ranks of Sir Robert Walpole and George II., to those of Frederick, Prince of Wales. In the household of the Prince, Bubb, who lacked neither good qualities nor ability, descended to play the fool. Horace Walpole tells us that "he submitted to the Prince's childish horse-play, being once rolled up in a blanket and trundled down stairs." He changed sides more than once; lent and lost money to the Prince; was laughed at, to his very face, by the King; slept in a bed canopied with peacocks' feathers; and kept fools, "a tame booby or two," of his own. These were

Wyndham, his heir; Sir William Bruton, keeper of George II.'s privy purse; and Dr. Thompson—"a misanthrope, a courtier, and a quack," as Cumberland names them. Thompson appears to have been the most ignoble of the "monks" who sojourned at "La Trappe,"—so Doddington called his company and mansion at Hammersmith. Thompson was ostensibly his medical adviser; but he practised his profession like a fool, and was treated by his patron as patrons were wont to treat fools of more audacity than wit. On one occasion, the Doctor observed Doddington, at breakfast, about to help himself to muffins. He denounced them as indigestible, and loudly bade the servant, "Take away those muffins!" "No, no!" said Doddington, pointing to the Doctor, "take away that ragamuffin!" In this way were "tame boobies" treated by their patrons, who, themselves, were princes' fools.

At an earlier period, that, namely, of Louis XIV., we find instances of noble persons assembling in their houses people of a very inferior rank, for the purpose of drawing from them something more than amusement. The Duchess de la Ferté was one of these. This exalted personage was in the habit of inviting all her tradespeople to her house. She entertained herself with their peculiarities at table, and then set them down to play with her at lansquenet, or some similar game. Madame de Staël, who tells the story in her Memoirs, adds, "The Duchess would sometimes whisper to me, 'I am cheating the fellows, but Lord! serve them right! Don't I know how they rob me daily?'" So that the Duchess made her fools pay their expenses, and her own.

In the reign of George III., although the fool did not exist as a professional man, we have an instance of a professional man enacting the fool, with good intent and profitable purpose. The person alluded to is the learned and laughter-loving Dr. William Battie, who was a well-reputed London physician in portions of the reigns of George II. and his

successor. He was celebrated for his treatment of the insane; and is thus described in the '*Battiad*,' a poem of which he was the hero.

"First Battas came, deep read in worldly art,
Whose tongue ne'er knew the secrets of his heart.
In mischief mighty, though but mean of size,
And, like the Tempter, ever in disguise.
See him with aspect grave and gentle tread,
By slow degrees approach the sickly bed;
Then, at his club, behold him alter'd soon,
The solemn doctor turns a low buffoon."

But Battie could play the fool, even to better purpose by the sick bed, than the buffoon at his club. It is told of him that he had a young male patient whom obstinate quinsy threatened with almost instant suffocation. Battie had tried every remedy but his foolery, and at last he had recourse to *that*. Setting his wig wrong side before, twisting his face into a compound comic expression, and darting his head suddenly within the curtains, he cut such antics, poured forth such delicious folly, and was altogether so irresistible, that his patient, after gazing at him for a moment in stupefaction, burst into a fit of laughter which broke the imposthume, and rescued the sufferer from impending death.

The above, however, is only a sample of how a professional man could apply folly to a wise end. We have something more resembling the professional fool or dwarf, in the case of a retainer of the Duke of Ancaster who died in 1779. Walpole mentions him in a letter to Lady Ossory. "I hear the Duke of Ancaster has left a legacy to a very small man that was always his companion, and whom, when he was drunk, he used to fling at the heads of the company, as others fling a bottle."

Although, professionally, the vocation had gone, it is still worth observing, that other patent places which had originated in feudal times, had not gone with that of the jester. "If my memory does not deceive me," says Burke in his

speech on the royal household, in 1780, "a person of no slight consideration held the office of patent hereditary cook to an Earl of Warwick." The orator rightly conjectured that the Earl's soups "were not the better for the dignity of his kitchen;" and he adds his belief that "an Earl of Gloucester officiated as steward of the household to the Archbishops of Canterbury." The orator found a curious relic of those old times when these practices were common, in the household of George III. He did not meet with any witty fellow there patented as fool, but he discovered something akin to it; namely, that the turnspit in the King's kitchen was a Member of Parliament!

The annals of succeeding reigns bear the names of several courtiers whose office it was to amuse and gratify their Royal patron. How George III. himself could play the court jester with effect, I will tell in a chapter devoted to sovereigns who occasionally were their own fools. How Colonel Haager and others of more recent periods have played first cousins to the more ancient jokers, it is unnecessary here to enumerate. I will rather conclude my long, and I fear imperfect, chapter, by showing also the conclusion of the actual line of hired fools in noble English households. It is not so very long since the last of this class died and left no successor. Mr. Douce, in his pleasant Essay on clowns and fools, gives the names of the last of them who practised professionally in this country. The household fool survived the court fool; and after Muckle John closed the line of the latter, there was was still bread to be earned by the profession of the former. According to Mr. Douce, the favourite Lord Chancellor of George I., the eminent Lord Talbot, kept a fool, probably at his country-house, if at all. Mr. Douce tells us that his name was Rees Pengelding, and that he was a shrewd fellow who rented a farm under his patron. It happened that Rees was a little backward with his rent, and he was harshly menaced by the steward, who wound up his

objurgations by exclaiming, "I'll fit you! I'll fit you!" Now it happened that the steward, in his earlier days, had been a tailor, the remembrance of which caused Rees to call out in return, "Fit me! will you? Well, it will be the first time in your life you ever did such a thing!"

I feel bound to add, that Lord Campbell, in his life of Chancellor Talbot, makes no mention of this fool, Pengelding. May not the latter have been simply favoured, because of the sharpness of his wit? It is difficult to conceive that the profound scholar in Roman civil law; the friend and equal of Philip Yorke, the enlightened statesman; the only Chancellor who had ever sat on the Woolsack without making an accuser, a detractor, or an enemy; a man, in short, in whom was "joined the utmost freedom of dispute with the highest good breeding, and the vivacity of mirth with primitive simplicity of manners,"—it would be difficult to conceive that such a man, the friend of Butler the divine, and patron of Thompson, could take delight in a mere household fool, were we not reminded that even more intellectual Chancellors than he, in earlier, but not in less refined days, could find relaxation in listening to the professional joker. In connection with my subject, I shall be excused if I notice that when Talbot was appointed Chancellor, a grand "Revel" was given in his honour by the Inner Temple (1734), and that this was the last festivity of the sort at which royalty attended at an Inn of Court. There has been a royal entertainment in our own days, at Lincoln's Inn, but Talbot's "Revel" was the last of its class.

Mr. Douce also names a certain Robin Rush as being fool, in the last century, to Lord Bussy Mansel; and Mr. Douce adds, that in 1807 there were people living who remembered him. Sir Edward Stradling, of St. Dorret's Castle, Glamorganshire, was another of the lords of land who kept a fool in his house at the same period;—a fool of sharp and ready wit. We have still more satisfactory proof of the

existence of a household fool in the last century, in the person of Dicky Pearce, "fool to Lord Suffolk," for which fool, being dead, Dean Swift did what Ronsard failed to do for a more witty jester at the court of France,—namely, write his epitaph. Dicky Pearce lies in Berkeley churchyard, Gloucestershire, and these are the lines the Dean has placed above his grave:—

"Here lies the Earl of Suffolk's fool,
Men called him Dicky Pearce;
His folly served to make folks laugh,
When wit and mirth were scarce.

"Poor Dick, alas! is dead and gone;
What signifies to cry?
Dickeys enough are still behind
To laugh at by and by."

The last recorded instance of a domestic fool being kept in an English family, is that of the jester retained at Hilton Castle, Durham, by John Hilton, the descendant of the old barons of that name, who died 1746. Surtees, in his 'History of Durham,' notices this fact, and adds one touch of the wit of this anonymous fool, who seems to have borrowed a traditionary joke of his great predecessor, Archie Armstrong. His master, we are told, on one occasion of his returning to his northern seat from London, left his carriage at the ferry near the castle, and proceeded towards that building over a foot-bridge, at the end of which the fool was awaiting his patron. The latter was attired in a gaily gold-embroidered dress, according to the fashion of the times, and made in the south, by a fashionable tailor. The fool gazed on his master with mingled astonishment and vexation, and, in place of greeting his return with a welcome, boldly looked him in the face, and inquired, "Who 's the fool now?" This is the last recorded joke of the last recorded jester; and the long line could not have gone out with a milder, though it might have done so with a less impertinent, jest. Hilton's fool

may, I think, fairly rank as the *ultimus stultorum* (he was remembered by aged Cumberland people, as late as 1812), though in point of fact the honour may be disputed by the nameless individual who figured, though it was only for the nonce, at the Eglinton tournament, in 1839, where knights tilted in spectacles, and the spectators looked on at the solemn fun, under rain and from beneath umbrellas.

Thus the fool went out in a rather gorgeous fashion. There was a grand tableau as the curtain descended which had been up in England for so many centuries. I am bound to add that the Eglinton fool may find a rival as to the honour of closing the merry line, in Shemus Anderson, the fool of Murthley Castle, Perthshire, who died in the year 1833. He had grown tolerably rich in his vocation; had suffered losses, like Dogberry; but left behind him some comfortable hundreds of pounds to his heirs. Shemus, however, never wore the cap and bells, or nursed the bauble, or whirled the bladder and peas, or shook the clappers, or carried motley. He was a fool in undress; but in respect of fulness of character and costume, of circus jokes, and all the accessories of the part, excepting its indecencies, the Eglinton fool was the last of the race. He flickered up for a moment, as did the padded knights and the Queen of Beauty, to afford some idea to the times present of the aspect of the times past, as far as the latter could be exhibited in one of its gorgeous follies. The blaze of splendour was great, and the fool's fire of conundrums burnt bravely, but the rain extinguished it all; the umbrellas gave an air of ridicule to the scene; the thing was felt to be, after all, only a splendid sham; and accordingly the fool and the pseudo-feudal lords and ladies disappeared for ever. All that remains of the old reality are rags and shreds and fragments in the mansions of our nobles and gentles. At Glamis Castle a motley jacket still hangs, or did recently hang, on a peg in the wall, and at Stourhead is still pre-

served a jester's baldric, which may be devoutly kissed as a relic by the worshippers of Folly.

Some resemblance may be certainly traced between the conditions of the English court fool and the ancient parasite, and between the English household fool and the old Roman slave. With all, there was laughter excited by liberty of speech, which must have occasionally fallen like refreshing dew upon the ear of despot or noble, unaccustomed to listen to aught from others save his own exceeding glorification. The despot still retained the power of punishing the fool; and in this particular, the household jester, who was often a menial servant, the drudge of the family, very closely resembled the Roman slave, with whom his master would graciously exchange jokes one day, and whom he would scourge the next, The two, capricious master and servile yet audacious wit, agreed very well with despotism, and coarse times and manners; but with liberty and refinement, both expired, or underwent such modifications, or took such new forms, as to be no longer recognizable. The fool was for a season, but eccentricity of character, which was his great merit, naturally survived him.

It has been objected to many of the ancient traits of court jesters, that they were inventions of writers of fiction, and that they only illustrated a rude state of society. Thus, the incident of Scogan chalking the path to be taken by his wife to church, has been pronounced too farcical to be true. But the degree of humour which moved King Edward's jester to this act, has influenced many persons of later and more refined times than those in which Scogan uttered very questionable jokes for the amusement of his royal and princely patrons. We all know how Lord Hardwicke, when he was an attorney's clerk, and was ordered by his mistress to purchase a cauliflower, executed this commission, but sent the vegetable home in a sedan-chair at the lady's cost. An instance more striking, and closer to the point, is given us in

the person of the wealthy Margaret Wharton, whom Foote introduced in one of his pieces, as "Peg Pennyworth," a name which the lady had acquired when a visitor at Scarborough, by sending every night for a pennyworth of strawberries and cream, for her supper. In this dramatic piece, Mrs. Wharton afforded mirth to princes, courtiers, and citizens, with whom the farce was a great favourite. Ord, in his 'History of Cleveland,' narrates several anecdotes of her humour, of which I select one that may contrast with that of Scogan. "In one of her visits to Scarborough," we are told, "she, with her usual economy, had a family pie for dinner, which she directed the footman to convey to the bakehouse. This he declined, as not belonging to his place, or rather derogatory to his consequence. She then moved the question to the coachman, but found a still stronger objection. To save the pride of both, she resolved to take it herself, and ordered one to harness, and bring out the carriage, and the other to mount behind, and they took the pie, with all honour and ceremony, to the bakehouse. When baked, coachee was ordered to put to a second time, and the footman to mount behind; and the pie returned in the same dignified state. 'Now,' says she to the coachman, 'you have kept your place, which is to drive; and yours,' to the footman, 'which is to wait; and I mine, which was to have my pie for dinner.'" It was just this sort of eccentricity of character which gave value to the old counterfeit fools, as we shall see further in subsequent pages.

Meanwhile I take leave of the English portion of my subject with the comment of Stillingfleet, who says:—

> "Leave to low buffoons by custom bred,
> And form'd by nature to be kicked and fed,
> The vulgar and unenvied task to hit
> All persons, right or wrong, with random wit.
> Our wise forefathers, born in sober days,
> Resigned to fools the tart and witty phrase;

The motley coat gave warning for the jest,
Excused the wound and sanctified the pest.
But we from high to low all strive to sneer,
Will all be wits, and not the livery wear."

If my readers have but patience to go forward, they will soon find themselves in company with the *Fous du Roi*, at the Court of France, where, for a long period, it was not possible for a fool to appear *without* his livery; but to which now the following lines are not less applicable than they are to other localities:—

"Why, pray, of late do Europe's kings
No jester in their courts admit?
They 've grown such stately solemn things;
To bear a joke, they think not fit.
But though each court a jester lacks,
To laugh at monarchs to their face,
All mankind do behind their backs,
Supply the honest jester's place."

THE COURT FOOLS OF FRANCE.

UNDER the word *Ministrelli*, a term said to belong to "Monk's Latin," were anciently comprehended in France, not merely Minstrels, but Buffoons, Mimes, and Jesters generally. They are called in common parlance, says Du Fresne, in his Glossary, "Menestreux or Menestriers," because they belong to the lower order of officers at court—"quod minoribus aulæ ministris accenserentur." The same author shows the early identity of the minstrel with the jester, by quoting an ordinance regulating the arrangement of a fishermen's religious festival held in early times at Toulouse; and which is to this effect. "Also, the fishermen shall be assembled, who ought to be present in the procession on that day with the *ministri* or *joculatores;* because the aforesaid fishermen are bound to have, on this special occasion, *ministri* or *joculatores*, in honour of the cross. . . And they should lead the procession, with the *ministri* or *joculatores* beating the drum, as far as the church of St. Stephen." From *joculator*, the French obtain their word *jongleur*, and through the latter we have our own term *juggler*. The monks made little distinction between different orders of minstrels, who were usually described by them as minstrels, or jesters; signifying that the officials designated under those names were one and the same. There is little doubt, at all events, of the French jester having ultimately sprung from the profession of the minstrel, when the latter was in its decline. It is perplexing, however, to find that although the minstrel or joculator is continually repre-

sented as being something of a musician, yet that Du Fresne, who frequently so describes him, also quotes a law of 1381, wherein we read that this worthy was altogether forbidden from playing on either a stringed or wind instrument: "Nullus ministreys seu jogulator audeat pinsare vel sonare instrumentum cujuscunque generis." The law was evidently not of universal application, as may be gathered from Aimonius, who, when treating of the miracles of St. Benedict, shows us a buffoon, both singing and playing, in his vocation of bard. His words are: "Tanta vero illis securitas, ut scurram se præcedere facerent, qui musico instrumento res fortiter gestas et priorum bella præcineret, quatenus his acrius incitarentur."

Enough, however, has been previously said on this subject; I will therefore turn from it, to that of the costume of the French "fou." Most of the French writers on the subject of court jesters, maintain that the colours of the native fool were, almost invariably, yellow and green, striped. Many scores of pages have been written to show that these colours were selected, because they were in little estimation by modish people; yellow being generally worn by executioners, or by criminals, and green signifying jealousy and various other bad qualities. All this may be ingenious, but it is purely imaginary; for we find French court buffoons glittering in scarlet and gold, as well as green and yellow, and sometimes dressed in suits in which were to be counted the seven hues of Iris herself.

One especial circumstance is remarkable in our neighbours' fools; namely, their consumption or waste of shoe-leather. In 1404, I meet, in the *Collection de la Chambre des Comptes*, with an entry of forty-seven pairs of shoes to Hancelin Coc, fool of Charles VI., and of seven pairs for the fool's "varlet," showing that Sir Witless was sometimes thought sufficiently noble or gentle to be worthy of a man to attend upon him; and yet Hancelin was dressed in a suit

of *iraigne*, a material of which I can find no explanation in any French author, but which is described as of a reddish brown, and which was also used "pour garnir la chaière nécessaire pour servir au retrait du dit seigneur, le roy Charles VI."

Thus the French fools were not always attired in green and yellow, and an additional proof is to be found in the fact, that on the occasion of the marriage, at Abbeville, of Louis XII., with Mary, the sister of Henry VIII. (subsequently wife of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk), among the personages, allegorical or otherwise, that were made to take part in the rejoicings, was to be seen the figure of Triboulet, the King's fool, in a serge dress of red and yellow stripes. In a succeeding page referring to this jester, another proof will be found that green and yellow were not the exclusively official colours worn by the jesters at the court of France.

It is not easy,—I should rather say, it is impossible, to define with any certainty the period at which the "Plaisans," as our merry friends are sometimes called, first held official rank, and were entitled to assume the appellation of *Fou* by right of legal appointment to the office. Flögel simply states, "the custom was so general, that historians expressed some surprise when they had to speak of a French court without an official fool in it." Two such examples we have in Philip Augustus and Charles VII., neither of whom had any relish for the antics and humour of the green-and-yellow-striped mirth makers.

The earliest example of a French court fool, given by Dr. Rigollet, is in the reign of Hugh Capet; but Flögel goes back a full century, and about the year 894 finds one, named Jean, at the court of Charles the Simple. This good fellow's influence was so great, that Charles once remarked to him, he thought they had better change places. As Jean did not look well pleased at the proposal, Charles

asked him if he were not content at the idea of being a king. "Oh, content enough," was the reply; "but I should be exceedingly ashamed at having such a fool." It was this fool who once tried his master's nerves, by rushing into his room one morning, with the exclamation, "Oh, Sire, such news! four thousand men have risen in the city." "What!" cried the startled King; "with what intention have they risen?" "Well," said Jean, placing his finger on his nose, "probably with the intention of lying down again at bedtime."

It is possible that this fool, like his master, was rather German than French; and we commence quite early enough with the latter, when we begin from the period of the father of Hugh Capet, whose fool comes before us in a very solemn and melodramatic way. The celebrated Duke, in 943, went on an expedition against the Normans, and among his followers, says the ever lively Ordericus Vitalis, was his buffoon, *mimus*, or *joculator*, as he is called by the chronicler. One day, at the Duke's table, the conversation fell on some holy personages who had died in the odour of sanctity. The *joculator*, being a fool, was a freethinker; and he dealt so rudely and sarcastically with these dead and sanctified individuals, in his ribald remarks, that the avenging justice of Heaven was aroused, and, says the smart Norman historian, a violent storm bursting forth from the skies, the lightnings flashed, and a thunderbolt, tearing down from the clouds, dashed through the roof, and at one stroke annihilated the jester and all who had moved him to asperse the Saints, or who had joined in the laugh he had raised against them.

Taking the *Mimus* to be a species of court fool who sang to the accompaniment of some instrument, when required, then Louis VIII. had such an official at court, though whether this *mimus* held his post by patent or not, is not mentioned by Nicholas de Braia, who notices the fact itself.

This chronicler describes a grand banquet given by the King, shortly after his coronation, and which must have been a very jovial affair. "While they warm their hearts with the genial gift of Bacchus," says the poet historian, "and care is swept away from the brow of the Prince by draughts of various wines, a mime celebrated for his skill on the harp, rises, and smiting his instrument, sings the praises of the King." These praises were very highly strung indeed; and we only need to be told that censure, if necessary, or sarcasm, if opportunity allowed, was scattered amid the laudation, to be assured that the *mimus* here spoken of was really something of the official fool also.

Although examples constantly present themselves of the unlicensed liberty which the French *plaisants* took with their masters, instances are not wanting of their delicacy or timidity. For instance, when the fleet of Philip was captured or destroyed by that of Edward III., there was no one at court bold enough to communicate tidings of the disaster to the King, except a court fool, whose name has not, however, been mentioned by any historian. Going into the royal chamber, the *fou* began muttering, "Those cowardly Englishmen! The chicken-hearted Britons!" "How so, Cousin?" asked Philip. "How so? Why, because they have not courage enough to jump into the sea, like your French sailors, who went headlong over from their ships, leaving those to the enemy who did not care to follow them!" And thus the King learned, by a most unpleasant method, the humiliation that had come upon him as well as defeat. The sarcasm must have fallen as painfully on the King's ear as the assertion of the *Journal des Débats* on the ear of all England, with respect to those Indian calamities which included the massacre of our women and children, namely, that France looked upon it all, "with curiosity and satisfaction!"

Saintfoix, in his History of Paris, and indeed many other

authors conclude, because Charles V. of France announced to the authorities at Troyes in Champagne, that his fool was dead, and requested them to provide him with another, that the town in question monopolized the provision of this article for the court; but Dr. Rigollet, author of 'Les Monnaies des Évêques,' etc., quotes an autograph letter of the same King, dated February 1364, in which Charles orders the cashier of his treasury to disburse 200 francs, "to fetch hither a fool for us who is now in the Bourbonnois." If this be not conclusive, the fact that the royal jesters came from parts of France where the municipality of Troyes could have had neither authority nor influence, would seem to be more so. Though, after all, the Champagne magistrates *may* have procured the jesters where they knew a superior specimen was to be found, without regard to locality.

Once engaged, the poor slave—for he was little else—could not sleep out of the palace, unpermitted, without danger of a whipping when he returned. Neither could he lay aside his dress, without sanction of his master; and even then, were he to clap a sword on his thigh, and so try to pass abroad for a gentleman, and this offence came to the ears of the "King of the Ribalds," the provost-marshal of the King's household, the fool might reckon on being scourged till the blood ran down to his heels. Further, it does not appear that the fool could at will divest himself of his office. He was bound to serve, and it was only the royal word that could set him free from his bonds.

In one or two instances the monarch exhibited some attachment to his *fou*, by honouring his memory after death. The King Charles V. buried two of his jesters beneath sumptuous monuments. This King, too, was called "the Wise." One *plaisant* thus honoured was interred in the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, but I can find no account of his tomb in any description of the church to which

I have had access. The second was a *fou* of some condition apparently, for he bore a noble name, and that is not the case with any *fou à titre d'office* that I have yet heard of. The one in question was Thevenin de St. Ligier, whose body was deposited in the church of St. Maurice de Senlis. The tomb is described as being of stone, ten feet by five, on which lies a figure of a man in a long robe, whose head and feet are of alabaster. He wears the fool's hood, and other insignia of his office, among which is the long wand, which he grasps in his hand. The scroll of the tomb is composed of very small figures elaborately carved, and the inscription tells the reader that "Here lies Thevenin de Saint-Ligier, *fou* of the King our Lord, who deceased on the 11th of July, in the year of Grace 1374. Pray God for his soul."

We see the *fou* hardly less honoured when, instead of being spendidly interred by his master, he follows the body of his patron to the tomb, amid the esteemed friends and followers especially selected to fittingly grace the solemn occasion. This was the case in 1416, at the obsequies of John, Duke de Berri. The funeral of that prince was a very stately affair; and not the least sincere mourner who was near the coffin, was the Duke's favourite *plaisant*, who was attired in a full suit of sables, and bore himself with as much dignity as any noble there present. If my readers choose to accompany me any further, they will find German *narrs* making a mockery of woe, but no samples of their honouring departed worth, as may be found among the *fous* of France.

It was not every *fou* who was a *plaisant* to his master. Louis XI. must have discovered as much after taking into his service the jester of his deceased brother, Charles, Duke de Guyenne. The Duke and his mistress, "the lady of Monsoreau," in the month of May 1472, being at dessert, divided between them a peach, presented to them by the

kind Abbot of Saint-Jean d'Angeli. The lady and her lord *par amour*, speedily died, and their *fou* passed into the service of the King. Some time after, Louis XI., then praying in his oratory, his fool standing by, held a little discourse and bargaining, as was his wont, with Our Lady of Clery. The staple of the royal discourse with the Virgin, was to this effect, that he and she being on the most friendly terms, mutually patronizing each other, she of course would arrange with Heaven that the King should not suffer for the murder of his brother; but that the Divine vengeance might very appropriately fall on the Abbot of Saint-Jean d'Angeli, whom Louis had employed to commit the deed, and who, as the monarch assured the Virgin, was a very sorry rascal indeed, fit for nothing better than everlasting perdition. "Just arrange this little matter for me, as I would have it," said the King, "and I have in my eye some very pretty presents that I will offer at your altar." According to Brantôme, this pleasant confession and proposed arrangement were overheard by the *fou*, whom Louis looked upon as an amusing imbecile without discretion. But the *plaisant* loved his old master; and he must have as bitterly hated as he little feared his new patron, if it be true that he accused him of the crime before an august company at a grand banquet. The fool was probably soon disposed of, but when the great Duke of Burgundy laid fratricide to the charge of Louis, the latter met the charge manfully. He shut up the Abbot of Saint-Jean d'Angeli in a dungeon, and appointed two commissioners to examine into the accusation. Shortly after, the Abbot was found strangled in prison,some said, by himself; others declared, by the devil; while some thought of the King, and said nothing,—which was what Louis himself did. The examination having proceeded thus far, the King rewarded the two commissioners. He made Louis d'Amboise, Bishop of Albi; and to Pierre de Sacierges he gave a sine-

cure post of great value. Therewith the examination was at an end, and Louis, at his next *tête-à-tête* with the Holy Virgin of Clery, probably talked like a man who had been wronged by false suspicion, and had come cleverly, if not triumphantly, out of a trying ordeal.

Having mentioned the great Duke of Burgundy, I may here appropriately add a word or two of the famous "Le Glorieux," the French jester to Charles the Bold. Le Glorieux was a facetious fellow, and as fearless as facetious. His master, Duke Charles, used to compare himself with Hannibal. After the overthrow at Granson, Duke and fool were galloping in search of safety, with many others. The Duke was in gloomy wrath, Le Glorieux was full of wicked gaiety. "Uncle," cried he to Charles, "this is the prettiest way of being like Hannibal that I ever saw."

So again, subsequently to the defeat sustained by the Duke before Beauvais, Charles was conducting some ambassadors over his arsenal. In one of the rooms the host remarked, "This chamber contains the keys of all the cities in France." At these words, Le Glorieux began fumbling in his pockets, and looking about the room with an air of anxiety. "Now, ass," cried the Duke, "what are you searching for so anxiously?" "I am looking," answered Le Glorieux, with a significant smile,—"I am looking for the keys of Beauvais."

A lost battle would seem, indeed, to have always heightened the spirits of the licensed fool. We have another instance in the case of the jester of the Marquis del Guasto, a general in the service of Charles V. While his captors were hauling over his baggage, after the day of Cerizoles, his fool exclaimed, "Ay, ay, you will find all sorts of valuable things there, except spurs, of which truly my master has plenty, but he keeps them all to enable him to get quicker out of the fray."

"*Poeta regius*," to quote the very words of Ménage (in

the third volume, p. 183, of the 'Ana,') "en bon François signifie 'Le Fou du Roi." Otherwise, King's poet, as royal poet laureate, signifies in good English, as I may here put it, 'King's Fool.' For this reason Ménage is inclined to reckon Andrelini, who was the "crowned poet" of Louis XII. and Anne of Brittany, among the "fous du Roi;" and he refers us to Bayle upon that subject. The latter, however, does not bring Andrelini (who styled himself *poeta regius et regineus*) nearer to the cap and bells than by showing that he poured forth verses in astonishing abundance, and was paid for them by the hundred. He appears also to have enjoyed somewhat of the license and privilege of the jester, for he uttered bitter satires against the theologians at a time when to attack them was to run the risk of death. And yet Andrelini shot his bolts with impunity, partly because he reflected lustre on the University of Paris. He was a jester, probably, only as John Heywood was with us. He lived as loosely as any titled jester of them all, and his lax rule of life is sufficiently indicated by Erasmus, in the words (see the twentieth Letter in the 4th book of the Collected Letters of Erasmus) addressed to Peter Barbirius, and which imply that the writer could tell more if he would; that Peter knew a good deal about the matter himself; that Andrelini was a loose fellow; and that his rule of life was tolerably notorious. "Quam non casta erat illius professio! Neque cuiquam obscurum erat qualis esset vita!"

We now come to some renowned names in the register of the *plaisants*. The first of these is Triboulet. The individual known by this nickname does not appear to have been in the service of Louis XII., as is sometimes stated. Indeed, Du Tillot professes to be ignorant of the names of any official fool in the court of that King or of his predecessor, Charles VIII. But he has no doubt whatever of the official presence of jesters at both courts. Such presence was a matter of strict etiquette, and Du Tillot sup-

poses that Anne of Brittany, the wife of both the above-mentioned sovereigns, having introduced a very serious tone at court, the wearers of motley only played a subordinate part.

With Francis I., two of the most famous of French "plaisans" appear on the stage, Caillette and Triboulet. These names were fictitious, but they are the only appellations by which this merry pair, who hated each other heartily, were known in their own time, or are known in ours. History, too, has dealt confusedly with both jesters, confusing their biographies, jokes, and adventures, and occasionally forgetting that there were two Caillettes, father and son, of whom the latter was appointed fool against his own inclination.

According to popular tradition, Caillette was to Triboulet, what the simpleton in the *Auberge des Adrets* was to Robert Macaire,—the scapegoat for the other's offences. He was, we are told, idiotic, or pretended to be so; and when witty, it was more after the fashion of a clown in a pantomime, than that of a happy low comedian, to which Triboulet may sometimes be compared; though the latter occasionally interfered with politics and spoke little brilliant things like a fine gentleman in a comedy. Jean Marot, however, says of him, that he had as much wit when he was thirty as when he was three years old. The court pages, say the biographers, could do as they pleased with Caillette, and on one occasion they nailed him by the ear to a beam. The poor fool thought he was condemned to remain there for life. On being discovered by some police authority, he was questioned; but he only replied that he did not know who had fixed him there. The pages were confronted with him, but each declared in turn, "I had nothing to do with it," and each time, Caillette added, "And I had nothing to do with it either." The alleged offence was, that the fool had cut off a page's aiguillettes and attached them to his person

in the guise of a tail. A similar story is told of Triboulet by the "Bibliophile Jacob" (Paul Lacroix) in his 'Deux Fous,' to which volume I am indebted for many antiquarian details touching the discipline of jesters at French courts, as well as for various incidents in the lives both of Triboulet and his rival Caillette.

Tradition, without bringing down to us any samples of the quality of Caillette, was long inconsistent with itself, by diversely representing this jester, now as a sorry, and at other times as a very brilliant, practitioner of his craft. There can be little doubt of the existence of a father and son of this name and office; and Paul Lacroix has followed out this idea in his work, noticed above.

According to this writer, who, it is necessary to remember, mingles a good deal of fiction with his antiquarian facts, the elder Caillette was a very inferior wit to Triboulet, and hung himself out of vexation at having been defeated by him at a match of cudgelling of brains. I do not know how much of reality or how much of merely fanciful is included in the following details; some portions may be less *vrai* than *vraisemblable*, and with this warning, I place before my readers an outline of the younger Caillette, whose elaborate full-length has been superbly painted by a master in the romance of history.

While the father was exercising his vocation at the court of France, the son was sojourning in the château of the Count de St. Vallier, as a friend rather than a dependant. As a youth, he had attracted the attention of the famous Constable de Bourbon by his beauty and intellect. The Constable could not believe him to be of the low origin commonly assigned to him, and it was at Bourbon's instigation that the Count de St. Vallier took the boy into his household, and educated him in company with the Count's renowned daughter, Diane de Poictiers. In such society the younger Caillette remained, happy, loved, and light-

hearted, till the period of the marriage of Diane with M. de Brézé, Grand Seneschal of Normandy. From this time, his character became changed. He lost his gaiety and his happy carelessness; studied more, in order to forget his sorrows, among which the circumstance of his father holding the office of fool to the King, was by no means the least.

Francis I. was at Moulins, where he had held the son of the Constable at the baptismal font, when he heard of the death of the elder Caillette. This high festival, celebrated at Moulins, had attracted a noble company, and among them was the Count de Saint-Vallier, with the younger Caillette, then about nineteen, in attendance on him. The death of the father, the fool, had more touched Francis than the demise of any of his ministers could have done; and when he heard and saw who was in attendance upon the Count de Saint-Vallier, he resolved to perpetuate the name of the deceased by appointing his son to the vacant office. The appointment was resisted by the noble patrons of the son, and by the latter himself with the energy of despair. But all in vain. The youth, who had looked forward to wield a sword, was compelled to carry the fool's bauble. He would have committed suicide, but for the intervention of his confessor.

This jester against his will, is described as being of noble mien, perfect in figure, graceful in manner, attractive and spiritual in physiognomy, and singularly elegant in his expression. He charmed the King by his admirable reading of poetry, by his happy facility of improvising rhymes, and by his readiness to compose verses, which Francis did not disdain sometimes to pass off as his own. This learned, philosophical, classical, and noble fool, who possessed more natural qualities than the King himself, was of course loved by many a great lady at court; but *his* homage was for one alone, and that *one* was Diane de Poictiers.

But here we assuredly get into romance; which continues to run in this wise. The Count de Saint-Vallier

was sentenced to death for alleged complicity in the treason of the Constable against his country. Caillette exerted himself with unexampled vigour to procure the release of his old patron, for he had obtained from Diane a promise that she would reward him for succeeding in the rescue of her father from a terrible death, by kissing him in the presence of the whole court of France. It was into that presence that he proudly brought, at last, the pardon which his prayers, and still more his ingenuity, had wrested from the King; but at that moment poison was slaying him, and it was only as the dying fool drew his last breath that Diane stooped to kiss him, and thereby gave sweetness to bitter death. He died in a condition of ecstasy.

"Holy St. Bagpipe!" exclaimed Triboulet, "pray for the defunct! I am now first titled fool in the court of France."

We may dismiss, as unfounded, the legends, and, as unsaid, the wit touching Triboulet and his remarks on the folly of the Emperor Charles V. trusting to the honour of Francis I. by passing through France, and the greater folly of Francis in not taking advantage of the circumstance to seize upon the Emperor. Triboulet was in his grave before the last delicate affair was even negotiated (1538), and all the smart sayings had been uttered previously, under similar circumstances, by other jesters. Indeed, the best things attributed to Triboulet are of questionable authority. Thus, we hear of his complaining to Francis of a nobleman who had threatened to beat him to death for some impertinent joke. "If he does," said the King, "I will hang him a quarter of an hour afterwards." "Ah, Sire!" exclaimed the *fou*, "could n't you contrive to hang him a quarter of an hour previously?" Something like this story is told of at least half-a-dozen wearers of motley.

There is another story told which certainly refers to Triboulet. He was passing over a bridge in company with a courtier, who observed that the bridge had no "garde-fou" or "parafool," as the common term ran for a *parapet*. "Surely,"

remarked Triboulet to the observation, "the people here did not expect that we two should cross it together."

There is something more of a joke in this fou's reply to another courtier who saw Triboulet galloping or caracoling on a magnificent horse when Francis made his public entry into Rouen. "You had better go more quietly, Cousin," said the courtier, "or you will suffer for it." "Alas, Sir," replied the *plaisant*, "what can I do? I stick my spurs into my horse's flanks to keep him quiet; and the more I prick, the more unruly I find the obstinate beast!" Such sayings as these were only tricks of vocation. Triboulet did not lack common sense, nor omit to use it for the benefit of those who appeared to have lacked their own. This was the case when Francis gave a courier two thousand crowns, as he mounted his horse, and proceeded on a mission to Rome; which place he undertook to reach within a space of time in which no human being could have accomplished the journey. "I will put you down in my register, Sire, as a fool, for believing a man can do what is impossible, and for paying him four times what were his due, even if he could achieve what he undertakes to do." "But, if he fails," said Francis, "he will restore me my money." "Will he, by my bagpipes!" exclaimed Triboulet; "then he will be a greater fool than yourself, and so I shall have two to register instead of one."

There is another *trait* illustrative of Triboulet, which has, nevertheless, been attributed, if I remember rightly, to the jester of Leopold of Austria, when planning his invasion of Switzerland. Francis I. summoned a council in 1525, to deliberate on the necessary measures for the celebrated campaign which ended in the capture of the monarch at Pavia. The counsellors did not spare their brains; and, at length having duly and unanimously decided on the most feasible means for successfully entering Italy, they broke up, and rose to separate.

"A moment, wise Sirs," said Triboulet, as he lay, supported on his elbow, at the feet of the King. "I pray your stupendous wisdoms to tarry an instant, while I intimate that, although you may fancy you have delivered yourself of the best possible advice to my cousin Francis, you have really forgotten the most important point of all."

"Ay! ay! merry cousin," exclaimed the King, "will your sage worship inform us how that may be?"

"Just this," answered Triboulet, with his merry chuckle. "They have told you how best to get into Italy. Now, you do not intend, I suppose, to stay there for ever; and your fool thinks they would have done well if they had counselled your Majesty, not merely how to get into Italy, but how to get out of it again."

"Tush! joyous companion," said Francis; "it is not needful. We shall return *tambour battant*."

"Very fine," rejoined the fool. "Vos tambours seront battus;" and at this *équivoque*, the council dispersed, laughing.

The "Bibliophile Jacob" says of Triboulet, that he was as truly an historical personage as any "grand pannetier," or "bouteiller de la couronne." Triboulet was a native of Blois, where he led a wild life in his youth, but entered early in the service of the Count d'Angoulême, afterwards Francis I., in the quality of jester. He may have been called the town jester, for he was for ever in the streets, playing on the bagpipes, basking in the sun, saying sharp things to all who passed near him, and impudently importuning everybody for money. It was in Blois that Triboulet cut the "pourpoint de livrée" of one of the pages of the Count d'Angoulême, as the young gentleman was hurrying through the streets on a mission connected with the coming visit of Louis XII. and Anne of Brittany. The page, unconscious of the trick played him, whereby he looked like a monkey *without* his tail, was hailed by his young fellows at

court with shouts of laughter. But when their laughter was at an end, they resolved to avenge the insult. They carried Triboulet off beyond the ramparts of the city, and, near the permanent gallows which was then no uncommon ornament in the vicinity of great cities, they began tormenting him, by pricking his feet with their daggers, dragging him by the hair, and burning his moustaches. This done, one merry and merciful young gentleman, looking at the fool's long ears (for which he was remarkable), proposed that he should be hung by them to the gibbet; and accordingly, they nailed him by the right ear in such a position that he was only supported by his toes, and his pitiful beseechings only raised the mirth of the tender-hearted young pages.

If we may believe the Bibliophile, who is, indeed, as frequently a romancer as an antiquary, it was as some compensation for this outrage, that Francis of Angoulême created Triboulet his fool by patent. The same writer adds, that the pages found the jester's tongue even longer than his ears; and, "remarkable fact, from this period, Triboulet, who was then about four-and-twenty years of age, suddenly ceased to be idiotic and imbecile, and became a witty, diverting, and crafty buffoon, and, above all, a perfect courtier."

In person, Triboulet was small and crooked; his head and ears were enormously large; his mouth proportionately wide; his nose must have been three times the size of that of Francis, who had otherwise the largest nose of any man in France: Rudolph of Hapsburg had not a larger. The fool's eyes were protruding; his forehead was low and narrow. "His flat and hollow chest," says Jacob, "his bowed back, his short and twisted legs, his long and hanging arms, amused the ladies, who contemplated him as if he had been a monkey or a paroquet."

We find one of the uses to which these official fools were put at this court, in a remark touching the costume of

Triboulet. "His dress was not less eccentric than his person. In accordance with his secret occupation of purveyor of pleasures to the King, he adopted the colours of the reigning mistress, and dressed in something of the fashion of his master. His *justaucorps* was of striped blue and white silk, fitting so tightly as to render his bodily deformity more conspicuous, and to excite more readily the laughter of all who looked upon him for the first time. On his back, thighs, and cap, were emblazoned the royal arms, and from his girdle of gilt leather hung the symbols of his office,—a club, a wooden sword, and a bagpipe. Another distinguishing mark of his office might be seen and heard in the little silver bells attached to his conical cap, his wand with a fool's head at the end of it, and his long-toed red morocco slippers. He could not advance a step, nor turn his body ever so slightly, without setting these bells in motion, and thereby making a noise louder than that of ten mules in full trot. Triboulet was proud of functions which placed him near the King, and which he would not have exchanged for a ducal coronet or an episcopal mitre. He used to say of himself, that he was 'the most noble in France, commencing from the lowest rank. . . . Keep duchies, countships, baronies, and marquisates to yourselves, Triboulet is sovereign lord of all at whom he mocks.'"

The Triboulet of Paul Lacroix is probably more like the original Triboulet than the half sentimental half savage hero of Victor Hugo's play, 'Le Roi s'amuse.' In this piece, the "fou" is rendered malicious by a three-piled misery,—he is infirm, deformed, and an official court fool. He hates all his superiors because they *are* his superiors, and detests those beneath him,—detests men generally, in fact, because they are not hunchbacked, like himself. He excites rank against rank, and all against the King, and the King against all. He is the bad genius of Francis, whom he corrupts, and the scourge of the nobility, the dishonour of whose

families he works through the King. He is Mephistophiles without superhuman power, for the lack of which he makes up by the intensity of his devilishness. Victor Hugo himself compares the buffoon and the King to a man holding a plaything and mortally wounding those among whom he capers with his toy. The buffoon is altogether without heart; yet not quite altogether, for there is one point on which he is as tender-hearted as ever father could be who had an only daughter dearer to him far than his own life. Yet he has no heart for other sires whose love for their daughters is ardent, but who would rather see them coffined at their feet than crowned and dishonoured. So, when the Count de Saint-Vallier denounces Francis, in open court, for having brought disgrace upon his child, Diane de Poictiers, Triboulet the fool insults the outraged parent; and the old noble, robbed of his daughter, curses Triboulet the man. On this curse the whole piece turns, and from the time it is fulminated, there is little that ensues which is illustrative of the office and pleasantry of the buffoon, though all is highly dramatic, and Nemesis rules without restraint. The curse of the old Count smites Triboulet through his child, whom the King carries off, and whom the father slays by mistake for the royal seducer. The moral of the piece is defective, seeing that the buffoon, for a thoughtless trick of his office, is the only person most terribly punished. The King, who is the gay stage villain of the piece, escapes scot-free. It is like sending Leporello *ad inferos*, instead of Don Giovanni. If the Triboulet of Victor Hugo be full of brilliant inconsistencies and glittering contradictions, he is in many things what tradition represents him to have been. He flings smart sayings at marriage, laughs at the King's pretensions to write verses, pushes or draws him into vice, and shoots a fool's bolt at woman, by styling her, "a highly perfected devil." His malice is illustrated by his delight at the opportunity offered him to cruelly rally the husbands

whom his highly perfected devils outrage and betray. His humour is to comment and criticize, while others, and especially the King, enjoy life after their fashion. Between his own condition and that of the master whom he serves, he draws a distinction of which he might reasonably have been the author, saying to Francis

"Vous êtes
Heureux comme un roi, et moi comme un bossu."

That Victor Hugo was careful of representing Triboulet in his vocation of buffoon, according to the way in which the contemporaries of the "fou" had spoken of him, may be seen in the speech of M. de Pienne to Marot, who is, and was, fool in all things but the title, with enough of that wit which our own national poet alluded to as requisite for a man who aspired to play the character becomingly. De Pienne says to Marot:—

"J'ai lu dans votre écrit du siége de Peschière,
Ces vers sur Triboulet, Fou de tête écornée,
Aussi sage à trente ans que le jour qu' il est né."

It is probable, therefore, that we find other reflections of the buffoon's actual character and his bearing towards Francis, in the best passages connected with him and his vocation. Triboulet certainly exhibits a turn of his profession when, after drinking with the monarch, he boasts of possessing two advantages over him, that of not being drunk, and that of not being King. The well-known freedom which he invariably took with Francis, is not less pleasantly illustrated by his satire against scholars, when the King's sister Margaret counselled him to surround himself with wise men, since he lacked the love of ladies.

"C'est bien mal," says the buffoon,—

"C'est bien mal
De la part d'une sœur. Il n'est pas d'animal,
Pas de corbeau goulu, pas de loup, pas de chouette,
Pas d'oison, pas de bœuf, pas même de poëte,

Pas de Mahométan, pas de théologien,
Pas d'échevin flamand, pas d'ours et pas de chien,
Plus laid, plus chevelu, plus repoussant des formes,
Plus caparaçonné d'absurdités énormes,
Plus hérissé, plus sale et plus gonflé de vent,
Que cet âne bâté qu'on appelle un savant.
. . . . . Médecine inouïe!
Conseiller les savants à quelqu'un qui s'ennuie!"

And again, we have a fact put in rhyme, though it be told of other buffoons, in the passage where Francis, pointing to three courtiers, tells Triboulet that they are employed in making sport of him. "Not of me," says Triboulet, "but of another fool." "And who is he?" asks Francis. "The King," briefly and drily replies the buffoon, who especially hated the courtiers, who as heartily hated the King's jester. Francis, still remarking on the three, observes discontentedly, "I have made one an admiral, one a grand constable, and of the third, controller of my household. What more could I do forthem?" "Well," returns Triboulet, "there is *one* thing more you might very justly do for them;—you might hang them!" It may be added, that the *plaisant* did not at all fear those whom he exasperated by the exercise of his wit; and his feeling in this respect is well illustrated by his remark to one of the illustrious gentlemen whom he had offended, and by whom he was thrashed:—

"Be assured, my good seigneurs, that Triboulet's far
From dreading the nobles 'gainst whom he makes war.
Dread! I dread nothing; my heart's calm and cool;
For I've nothing to risk but the head of a fool."

Triboulet, after his death, was not honoured, like Thevenin de Saint-Légier, with a magnificent tomb and a superscribed epitaph. Nevertheless, he did not lack a poet who at least penned an epitaph which is in very tolerable Latin, and has fool's wit in its closing turn. It is by Jean Bouté, was printed in 1538, and is to this effect:—

"Vixi *Morio*, Regibus qui gratus
Solo hoc nomine; viso num futurus
Regum Morio sim Jovi Supremo."

Among the frequenters of the court of Francis we occasionally meet with personages who had too much wit to be official *fous*, but whose humour was sometimes exercised like theirs, but without license. Their wit was enjoyed, but it was exercised at their risk and peril. Marot was one of those; and many are the stories of him that are little worth relating. Of the best of them, there is one which tells of his feigned simplicity, when he saw the French Ambassador at Rome kiss the Pope's foot. "Merciful powers!" cried Marot, "if the representative of the King of France kisses his Holiness's foot, what may a poor fellow like me be called upon to salute!" Marot, too, is the author of a smart saying that has been turned and re-turned in many a handbook of wit since his time. He was walking with a very fine court personage, who hated wits and poets, and who remarked to Marot, who was to the right of him, "I cannot bear, Marot, to have a fool on my right-hand." "Can you not?" said the wit, slipping round to the left, "I can bear it very well!" This wit satirized with his pen the hypocritical priests as stingingly as Triboulet did with his tongue the nobles whom he hated; and he was, consequently, once menaced with the vengeance of a bishop on whom he had been particularly severe. "Oh!" remarked Marot, "I am in no anxiety, I know a place where I can easily escape the research of the bishop. I will go and sit in his library."

It is true, that though the especial duty of the *fou* was to laugh and make laugh, and that he possessed not the privilege of weeping if choice or calamity urged him thereto, he had license of speech, and sometimes used it for the admonition as well as amusement of his master. In this respect, the *plaisant* often became a political personage

or agent of considerable importance; and an instance of this is recounted of Briandas, who was one of the official fools of Francis I., after the death of Triboulet, about the year 1538.

Francis had so neglected his wife, the gentle, pious, but grandeur-loving Claude, that their eldest son had little love for his sire; and the Dauphin, subsequently Henry II., was upon such terms with his father as the Princes of Wales were, under our Georges. They had their separate households, courts, and factions, and the feuds between the two were constant and bitter. It is worth remarking that Briandas, who was attached to the King's person, as "Bouffon de Cour," had free access to the Prince's presence at all times. On one of these occasions, he was present when the Dauphin and a few personal friends were discussing their future prospects and chances of fortune. The discussion took the turn of an appeal to the heir-apparent, as to the distribution of wealth and honours, when the reigning King, Francis, should be in his grave. The Dauphin did not seem to think that the matter was in any way delicate or difficult. He felt a joy in the mere fancy of being King, and joyously notified how he would deprive certain noblemen of the court of his father of their offices, and confer them on his followers present. The prince proceeded to sportively appoint various laughing applicants to divers posts coveted by them. All found themselves thus provided for, save one—the old Marshal Vielleville,—who had remained silent. Now there was another individual in the room, silent also; and he had not escaped the Marshal's observation. This was Briandas, the fool. The Marshal, in his honesty or great discretion, would not take part in the proceedings, the little decorum of which may have shocked an old-world courtier, and he remained taciturn, as if he disapproved of the entire comedy. The *fou* too was silent; but he was thoughtful also. No one, however, suspected him of having attended to what had been

going forward, or of his holding long in memory the serious joking of which he had been a witness. The buffoon, however, was not the man they took him for. He that night entered the apartment where Francis sat surrounded by his friends, and approaching his master with solemn gait, addressed him as solemnly of speech, with, "God greet you, *Francis of Valois*, for from what I have seen and heard this evening, you are King no longer!" He did not pause here, but turning to the various great officers of the crown, he announced to each that he was deprived of his dignity, to which a successor had been appointed. "God's death!" he finally exclaimed, turning sharp round upon the King, "as for you, the grand constable will soon be upon you, rod in hand, to whip you for your follies."

It would be difficult to say whether the wrath or the curiosity of the King was greater. He had his misgivings, too, as to indulging in either, for this might only be a fool's jest after all. His curiosity however had the mastery, and Briandas, in presence of Francis, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and the Duchess d'Estampes, was so closely questioned and cross-questioned, as to induce us to believe that the querists were more justified in trusting to his intelligence than the Dauphin and his friends had been in depending on his simplicity or imbecility. The buffoon succinctly revealed everything, named all the persons who had leaped into high saddles before their time, but made especial exception of Vielleville, as having neither applied for a post nor had one conferred on him by the foolish King *in posse*.

The royal curiosity satisfied, wrath took its place; and at the head of a body of Scottish and Swiss guards, Francis hastened, with the "fou," to arrest his own too hasty son and his adherents. These, however, had been timely forewarned, and had hurriedly decamped. There were no persons left in the Dauphin's chamber, except a few pages and servants, on whom Francis let his wrath fall, and ordered them to be soundly horsewhipped. They doubtless deserved

it for something or another, so that it was not altogether thrown away. The King acted less justifiably, even in the eyes of the buffoon, when he proceeded with his own hand to destroy the furniture in the Dauphin's chamber, and to slash the tapestry with his sword.

Months elapsed before the King and his son became partially reconciled, through the intervention of mutual friends. As for the Dauphin's followers, they were all punished by various measures of disgrace and severity, excepting Vielleville, who had marked the presence of Francis's fool, and in that presence had been too wise or honest to offend Francis's self-love. And thus things remained till the death of Francis and the accession of Henry. *Then* the long-before discussed probabilities, and the lavish promises, became realities. Francis's friends were swept from their high estate, and the trusty or eager followers of Henry appointed in their place. Never was the tune of 'Up go we' so admirably played out as on this occasion by the husband of Catherine de Medicis and his partisans. There were however two personages who did not join in the chorus, namely, the wise or discreet Marshal Vielleville and the loquacious but trusty fool, Briandas. The former was passed over for being too silent, and the latter suffered stripes and imprisonment for being too talkative.

Neither of these lost much by not serving Henry II. (especially as regards Briandas), for that King and his actual fool could never agree. The great man could not bear the license of the little one, and the latter could so indifferently endure the exasperating humour of his master, that he one day drew his sword upon the King. It could only have been his wooden sword, for fools could carry no other on their thigh; but Henry took the act of poor Capuchio as an act of treason, and the buffoon is said to have paid for it with his life.

Henry had far more regard for the fool Thony, whom he

raised to the rank of patented buffoon, after the death of the jester's late master, the Duke of Orleans. The Duke had taken him, at an early age, from his mother, at Coucy in Picardy. Thony had three brothers, all of whom were actually out of their wits, and the pious woman desired to see Thony in priest's orders, that he might pray for his witless brethren. "Leave him to me," said the Duke, "I will look to it." Therewith his highness carried him off; and as the aforesaid brothers had received appointments as house-fools in illustrious but private families, the Duke made a fool of Thony. He was a coarse, rough fellow at first, but the society of pages and courtiers improved him. By constant friction with such materials, he became remarkably polished and jocose. The constable Anne de Montmorency had an especial regard for Thony. He invited him to his own table, where the "fou" was served like a King, and where his chief joke seems to have been in complaining of the inattention of the pages and lackeys; and his chief enjoyment in seeing them smartly scourged in his presence for their neglect, real or alleged. The constable called him the most subtle courtier of a fool that he had ever seen. Thony exhibited his subtlety by naming the constable familiarly, his "Papa;" but this was only as long as that great officer was in favour with the King. When the royal favour had departed, Thony no longer looked with an eye of affection on him. Only the King's friends were *his* friends, so that, in one respect, the fool was like any ordinary man.

Indeed, some of the ordinary men were brighter wits than the fools. After the demise of Francis I. we meet with a personage who, without being a jester by vocation, probably caused more mirth and laughter at the court of Henry II. than was ever raised there by courtier or court fool. The name of this personage was Mendoza, and the first subject for his wit he found in

a solemn circumstance. Henry celebrated the obsequies of his predecessor in magnificent style. The priest who pronounced the funeral oration maintained that King Francis had been of so holy a life, that his soul had gone to Paradise without passing through Purgatory. The denial of Purgatory was a favourite tenet of the Reformers. The Sorbonne accused the preacher of heresy, and sent a deputation to St. Germain, to make known their complaint to the King. Mendoza, then a chief officer of the court, first received it, and, by a facetious speech, saved Henry from an act of injustice. "Calm yourselves, gentlemen," said he to the deputies of the Sorbonne; "if you had known the good King Francis as well as I did, you would have better understood the words of the preacher. Francis was not a man to tarry long anywhere; and if he did take a turn in Purgatory, believe me, the devil himself could not persuade him to make anything like a sojourn." What could the deputation do, save laugh themselves into good humour at the wit of this court official?

Indisputably the most celebrated of the French fools by right of patent, was Brusquet, whose whole career is tolerably well known, and who was in every respect one of the most singular characters of his time. He was a native of Provence; of his childhood little is known, save that he spent it in his native province; and there is some little uncertainty as to the profession with which he first started on his more public career. According to some authors, he appeared at Paris as a pettifogging lawyer, and was in danger of starving for want of clients. But Brusquet was an original fellow, and the nearer he was in danger of being famished, the more merrily he met what fate was preparing for him. Indeed, his mirth, wit, and light-heartedness procured for him a prosperity unattainable by the practice of the law, by introducing him to the tables of great men, as a professional jester.

There is another and a still more amusing version of the early professional life of Brusquet. According to this, he commenced as a quack doctor; perhaps he took up physic when he laid down law. However this may be, it is pretty certain that he was a medical hanger-on to the camp at Avignon, in 1536. He had of course little or no knowledge of his profession; but his patients died in greater ignorance than he. His *imqudence and boldness* were about equal; and he so dosed the Lanzknechts and Switzers, that he at last became as terrible to them as the enemy. They perished by scores under his vigorous practice, of which the modest practitioner seemed to think lightly; for after all, said he, "What are they? Only Swiss robbers and plundering riders." But these robbers and riders were first-rate troops, and their commanders could not afford to lose them at the rate by which they were despatched by the gay yet terrific Brusquet. And the quack began to be looked upon, in some sort, as an assassin. Indeed, the great constable de Montmorency, exasperated by the results of his peculiar medical skill, resolved to confer on him an assassin's reward, and, accordingly, ordered him to be summarily executed. Brusquet was warned in time, by friends who could better spare a legion of Lanzknechts than they could the brilliant-witted quack; and he at once betook himself to the quarters of the commander-in-chief, the Dauphin, afterwards Henry II. This prince knew of Brusquet's better qualities, by report, and he was so charmed by the fellow's manner and matter, his quaint address, his witty illustrations, and his method of making his offences assume the guise of merits, that he at once took him under his protection, exempted him from arrest by the camp provost, and appointed him to a subordinate place in the Dauphin's household.

If Brusquet really became fool by right of office, which seems to have been the case, it is certain that he was the

object also of much favour, enjoying privileges seldom if ever granted to the court buffoon. I have said, in a previous page, that the *plaisant* could never lay aside his official costume, nor sleep out of the royal mansion, nor clap sword on his thigh, except by permission (and that was rarely given) of his master. With Brusquet the reverse seems to have been the rule. He did not reside in the palace, although he held the office of jester to three kings, Henry II., Francis II., and Charles IX. He was, moreover, a married man, and he filled other posts besides that of mirth-maker to their Majesties. After being a sort of gentleman valet to Henry, he was elevated to the responsible and lucrative situation of "Maître des Postes," or Posting-master General of Paris. In this capacity he laid travellers under contribution without mercy. Very few could undertake a journey without having recourse to his office, and his fees being fixed by himself, journeying was found to be a very costly thing, without being in any sense of the word a luxury. He never had less than a hundred nags in his stables, ready for hirers, and he used to designate himself, with comic pomposity, "Brusquet, captain of the hundred light horse."

As with other jesters, the wit of Brusquet is oftener praised than cited. Some illustrations of it I will not venture to place before my readers. They may have excited laughter and applause from princes, courtiers, and ladies, three centuries ago, but the narration would be as intolerable now, as if a clergyman were to read to his congregation one of Mrs. Aphra Behn's comedies instead of the Gospel. And yet this buffoon was the especial friend and favourite of the Cardinal of Lorraine. That princely prelate of the house of Guise, kept a most brilliant and rather riotous court of his own at his "Hôtel de Cluny." It was a locality where the Cardinal loved to assemble round him philosophers, poets, historians, minstrels, wits, and abundance of pretty women, with wit or without it. The grossness of

Brusquet's jokes gave no shadow of offence here. It was a time when not only the "*gros mots*," but grossest practical jokes were highly relished; even when the Cardinal himself was made the object of them. As an instance, I will only allude to the story told in the Marquis de Bouillé's great work, 'Les Ducs de Guise,' how the Cardinal's intention to preach in the royal chapel, on one particular occasion, was completely frustrated by some court fools, official or otherwise. The Cardinal had even reached the pulpit; but on opening the door, he rushed from it in disgust. The reason for his so doing was long a matter of laughter in court and city.

Coarse as Brusquet was, he was not an ill-educated man, being well acquainted with the Spanish and Italian languages as well as his own; and this accomplishment may have rendered him useful as well as otherwise agreeable to the Cardinal. It is certain that the jester accompanied the Cardinal into foreign countries on more than one affair of State. The two respectively illustrious personages, with other individuals, more or less noble, were together at Brussels, in April 1559, when the Cardinal negotiated the peace of Cateau-Cambresis, with Philip II. of Spain. At a banquet in the house of the Duke of Alva, Brusquet exhibited to the royal and noble guests present a questionable trick of his calling. At the close of the dessert, he leaped on the table, laid himself flat, rolled himself up, with plates, spoons, fruit, etc., in the cloth, and fell off at the other end of the table. He could scarcely stand for the weight of silver and other table furniture which he had about him; but, says Brantôme, who tells the story, "the King, Philip II., ordered that he should be allowed to leave the room with what he had carried off under the cloth. Philip laughed so immoderately, and found the joke so exquisite, so humorous, and so clever, that he wished Brusquet to keep all for himself. It was a matter of astonishment that the latter did not wound himself with

the knives which were in the cloth with the other articles; but it is thus that God protects fools and infants."

It was on the occasion of this political visit to Flanders that Brusquet met with the Emperor, or ex-Emperor, Charles V., face to face. The old Emperor was still at the side of the King, his son, to counsel and guide him. At one of the solemn interviews at court, Charles recognized the well-known face of the fool among the French nobles composing the delegation. Charles did not dislike to exchange smart sayings with any one quick of wit; and after courteous inquiries touching the health of the fool, the ex-monarch said to him, "Brusquet, do you remember the day when the constable de Montmorency wanted to have you hanged?" "Do I remember it?" he replied to the question of Charles. "Right well do I remember it. It was the day on which your Majesty purchased those splendid rubies and carbuncles which now adorn your imperial hand." He said this in allusion to the inflamed gouty swellings which paralyzed the Emperor's fingers.

"Many thanks for your lesson, Brusquet," rejoined Charles, laughing good-humouredly. "I will take care to fence no more with a clever fellow who knows so well how to parry every thrust made at him." And the two, fool and monarch, fell to recounting to each other many a good story, in the art of doing which the sovereign was quite a match for the jester.

Philip was even more delighted with the *plaisant* than Charles; and, perhaps remembering the old adage, "Asinus asinum fricat," he despatched his own fool to France, to learn to be more witty than he was, by association with Brusquet; and to entertain King Henry, if he could, half as well as Brusquet had entertained Philip. Henry constituted the Spanish fool the guest of the Paris posting-master, and the latter contrived to draw profit from the charge, for the Spaniard had four horses of his own, and these Brusquet

let out every night, for posting purposes, and for his peculiar profit. The owner of the steeds became singularly puzzled by the worn and wretched condition into which his stud gradually fell; and for which Brusquet accounted by laying it to the water of the Seine, as deleterious to foreign horses. The Spaniard seems to have been an imbecile; but Brusquet was a felonious rogue. On the return of the former to Philip, the French King presented him with a gold chain, as a parting gift. Brusquet exchanged this, almost under the very nose of the fool, for a similar chain of brass; and then addressed a letter to Philip, informing him of the fact, and assuring him that his jester deserved to be flogged by the kitchen scullions, for being such a wretched dullard as to be deceived by a trick so common. Common as it was, however, Henry compelled his buffoon to restore the stolen chain, but gave him its value in money, as a compensation "for his sacrifice to honesty."

It is the assertion of Brantome, that if all the witty sayings, tricks, and traits had been collected, of which Brusquet was the author, they would have filled a bulky volume. "There was never his like," adds the enthusiastic sketcher of characters. "Never had he his equal among 'plaisants compagnons,' since these latter ever existed. . . . He was the first man for buffoonery that ever lived or ever will live, whether for speech, gesture, fun, or originality, in short, for everything; and all without giving offence or exciting displeasure." This is a fine eulogium but what Du Tillot said a hundred years ago, with relation to France, may be still more correctly stated in our own days, with relation to England, namely, that "our manners (morals) would not accommodate themselves with the actions of Brusquet, who enchanted every court and potentate of his time." Setting aside the incidents that ought not, and the turns and plays on words that cannot, be translated, and which hardly raise a smile even in their original language, I will add a few illus-

trations of the humour of a jester who was said to be the delight of every court and prince of his time.

Brusquet had great dread of the water, and one day, his friend the Cardinal invited him on a boating expedition. The jester promptly declined, alleging his cowardice by way of excuse. "You need not be afraid of any danger," said his Eminence, "for you will be in the protecting companionship of the Pope's best friend." "Ay, truly," replied Brusquet, "I have often heard that his Holiness has unlimited power in earth, heaven, and purgatory; but I never heard that he had much influence over the water." This is certainly wit of the very mildest sort, and we are little more edified by the trait which tells of his coveting a gold cup with a lid in precious stones, which he saw on the table of the Count of Benevento. That good-natured nobleman let him have what he coveted; but retained the movable lid which, with its sparkling gems, was exceedingly more valuable than the cup itself. "Count," said Brusquet, "we are in a cold country here in France, and it is hardly wise to let me carry my golden friend here home without his cap." The Count was liberal; he either esteemed the lid so little or the wit so much, that he bade the *plaisant* do as he would; and Brusquet triumphantly carried off both the cup and the cover.

He could, however, very tartly satirize men as greedy as himself. When Frenchmen were discussing as to the General most likely to be able to take Calais, Brusquet named a judge famous for taking bribes, and he added, "Why don't you send him to take Calais? he takes everything before him."

We get at something of the real life of Brusquet when we view him in connection with his great enemy, Strozzi, the son of a Princess de Medicis. The two were in continual antagonism. On one occasion, the Marshal appeared at court, on a gala day, in a splendid velvet mantle, magnificently embroidered. Brusquet had long coveted this ar-

ticle of dress; but being unable to obtain it, he resolved, if possible, to succeed by spoiling it for the owner's wear. Accordingly, on the occasion in question, he stood behind the unconscious Marshal, and with some pieces of fat and a larding-needle, he larded the mantle all over the back, in scrried and regular rows. The mischievous joker must have had confederates in most of the spectators; however this may have been, when he had completed his task, he suddenly turned Strozzi with his back towards the King, and asked the latter if he had ever seen a more tastefully embroidered mantle in his life. The owner, seeing the greasy trick of which he had been made the victim, proudly slipped the mantle from his neck, flung it to the "fou," but told him that he should pay dearly for his bargain.

The Marshal kept his word, but not till a sufficiently long period had elapsed for Brusquet to forget that it had ever been pledged. It was therefore not without satisfaction that the jester saw himself visited by the Marshal in company with an individual whom the Marshal introduced as a foreign prince. His highness, however, was nothing more than a locksmith, engaged by Strozzi to plunder Brusquet of his plate, of which he was known to possess a rather rich collection. The pseudo-prince was armed with a pick-lock, and when Strozzi had indicated to him the chest in which the treasure lay, the Marshal proposed a visit to the stables, while his highness, who was fatigued, rested awhile in Brusquet's chamber. This arrangement was immediately effected; and while the Marshal and the *plaisant* were discussing the points of horses, the illustrious stranger quickly operated on the plate, a valuable portion of which he contrived to conceal about his person. Shortly after, the three again met, and, after a pleasant gossip, they separated on the best of terms with one another. A considerable time elapsed before Brusquet discovered his loss, and even then he had no suspicion as to the plunderer. He proceeded to court, however,

made such a piteous statement of his loss to the King, that all who heard him felt compassion for him. Among the audience was Strozzi, who expressed a conviction that the whole, or best part of the plate might be recovered under promise of reward. Brusquet hurriedly declared that he could be content to give up one half for the recovery of the other. Thereupon Strozzi acknowledged the robbery, adding, "I will only retain a quarter of the whole, namely five hundred golden crowns' worth, and that not for myself, but as a recompense for the handiwork of my princely friend the locksmith."

The whole story forms a singular social trait of the times. With the arrangement made by the Marshal, Brusquet was compelled to be satisfied, and he received with sour gratification the three quarters of that of which he had been robbed. But he was resolved upon being revenged, and he found an early opportunity to realize his resolution. He one day saw Strozzi dismount from a magnificent horse, superbly caparisoned, in the court-yard of the Louvre. The steed was left in charge of a groom who walked it about, bridle in hand. To this man Brusquet went with a feigned message from his master, to obey which he was obliged to leave the horse in Brusquet's charge. When the groom had disappeared, the *fou* leaped on to the steed's back and galloped home. There, he cut off the whole mane and the half of one ear. He then changed the costly saddle and adornments of the charger, for a common saddle and beggarly adjuncts. This done, he clapped a heavy trunk on the crupper, put a still heavier postilion in the saddle, and set him off, on a flying gallop from Paris to Longjumeau and back. The horse was then sent to Strozzi, in a pitiable condition. It had been worth, that morning, more than five hundred golden crowns, and now Brusquet intimated that he would give fifty for him. The Marshal accepted the offer, returned the mutilated steed, and declared that he forgave

the trick, though he only intended to take proper compensation for it.

Strozzi set his compensation at a high price, and compelled Brusquet to pay a whole stud for a single horse. The Marshal obtained possession of the horses, by ordering them for the King's service. He took the whole of them to Compiègne, where, after riding them nearly to death, except eight which he kept for his own use, he distributed several among the troopers who wanted remounting, and he actually sold two to a miller, who employed them as beasts of burden. These last were identified by one of Brusquet's postilions, and the enraged proprietor had recourse to the law. But the law was almost inoperative against a powerful man like Strozzi, and was altogether so in this case, since Brusquet found that it would cost him more to ride after justice, than it would to resign himself to the loss of his "light horse."

He found, too, that the Marshal was too serious a joker for him to contend with, and accordingly, confessing himself defeated, he repaired to Strozzi's house, where he proposed measures of reconciliation. By-gones, he said, should be by-gones; and in future, he suggested, that all costly and injurious jests should cease between them, and only harmless trickery be allowed. The Marshal not only accepted the terms, but congratulated Brusquet and himself on their reconciliation, to celebrate which, he consented to be the guest of the "fou," and dine at the latter's house. Brusquet promised to entertain him and a number of courtiers, altogether a dozen, in princely style. At the appointed time, the guests appeared, and the host ushered them to table with a world of ceremony. He did not himself presume to sit down with them, but he displayed unwearied zeal in seeing them gallantly entertained. As they took their places at table, thirty postilions in their best dresses, entered the room and blew a post-horn *galop* as an

invitation to begin. The dishes consisted entirely of pies, but the odour of these was so appetizing, that the courteous guests abstained from making any remarks on the singularity of this first course. Brusquet wished them good appetite and happy digestions, and then left the room, ostensibly to prepare the second course. But with his dagger in his girdle, and his cap saucily cocked on his head, he hurried to the palace, and entered the presence of the King, laughing immoderately. To the inquiries of his patron, the *plaisant* replied that he had a dozen noble friends at dinner at his house, and that he had set them down to a first course of pies, under the pastry of which there was, in one dish, an assortment of rusty spurs; in another, a few brass-mounted bits; in a third, stewed stirrup-leathers; in a fourth, slices of old saddle, and so on. The relation amused the court much more than the fact itself did the invited courtiers. These, on discovery of the trick played them, were doubly enraged, for they were hungry as well as deluded; and they withdrew after overrunning Brusquet's house, like hostile soldiers in search of plunder, and threatening vengeance for the trick put upon them. The vengeance is said to have been accomplished by the Marshal, not exactly according to agreement, by which the respective parties were bound to abstain from actual mutual injury. Strozzi stole one of Brusquet's mules, which was converted into several venison pasties, and these, in a circuitous manner, were sent to the "plaisant," as a present from a duly-named friend. The "fou" ate plentifully, and was not informed of the trick till he had nearly eaten all. *Then* the Marshal showed him the head of the mule, informed him that he had devoured the hind quarters, and inquired how he liked his fare. Brusquet, who was more of an epicure than a glutton, was so disgusted as to remain ill and almost fasting for several days; but he did not remain without his *revanche.*

He happened to hear that the Marshal had ridden incognito into Paris, one Easter Sunday, being desirous of passing the festival quietly in his own house, and to avoid being summoned to court. A few minutes after Brusquet had learned the fact, he repaired to a neighbouring convent of Franciscans, where he required two of the holy brotherhood to follow him for a particular purpose.

"The fact is," said the jester, "I come from the family of a nobleman in the Faubourg St. Germain. He is possessed by an evil spirit; will hear nothing of God; fears as little touching the devil; scorns to celebrate the religious festival of Easter, and holds the entire brotherhood of priestly men in utter detestation."

Brusquet then crossed the palm of each brother with a crown-piece, which so inspired the two Franciscans, that they declared if the patient were possessed by a legion of devils, they would undertake to drive them all out of him. Therewith the three departed for Strozzi's house, where their appearance excited some surprise in the Marshal's personal attendant. The latter, however, gave way when Brusquet, after taking him aside, had informed him that his master had particularly important business to transact with the two spiritual gentlemen, and that they might enter the Marshal's chamber without being announced. The servant bowed and withdrew; Brusquet showed the Franciscans into Strozzi's bedroom, the door of which he immediately closed upon them, and remained standing on watch outside.

The monks found the Marshal lying on his bed reading. To his stare of surprise they meekly replied by inquiring how he found himself in soul and body. "So well, both in strength and spirit," said Strozzi, "that if you do not immediately decamp, I will fling the couple of you out of window." They concluded that he was very powerfully "possessed" indeed; and straightway with loud prayer, and some inharmonious singing, they proceeded to sprinkle him from head

to foot, with holy water. He really hissed with rage, as if he had been red-hot. Then, leaping from his bed, he grasped at his dagger, and flew at the monks. A fearful struggle ensued, and howling, and stamping, and showers of oaths on one side, and holy water on the other. When the uproar brought the servants of the Marshal to his assistance, they found him speechless with rage, and in the sudden temporary lull, Brusquet beckoned them from the room, and locked the door upon Strozzi and his attendants. He then paid and dismissed the Franciscans, and, fresh from this new exploit, he ran to the palace, and kept the whole royal and august personages there assembled, in a roar of laughter at the highly seasoned details which he exultingly recounted,—from the Marshal's ride into Paris, to the final exorcism made to relieve him from Satanic possession.

The joke was so exceedingly to the taste of his Majesty, that he despatched messengers to Strozzi to inquire after his ghostly and bodily health, and especially if the Franciscans had succeeded or failed in making a true believer of the most unbelieving man in France.

Strozzi never forgave this trick, which had rendered him ridiculous in the eyes of his own servants. He exacted a double vengeance, which fell heavily on the fool. The Cardinal of Lorraine had established an inquisitorial tribunal in France, and before this body, Brusquet was charged with heresy, and with open mockery of the religion of the State. The tribunal found it an easy matter to fling the alleged offender into confinement, with menace of loss of life. He was a well-plumed pigeon, whom of course, they did not intend to kill, but only to greatly terrify and thoroughly pluck. Brusquet was a coward and avaricious, but he bled freely in pistoles in order to save his life and purchase freedom.—Strozzi having injured him in purse, proceeded to assail him in his honour.

The year was 1555. The Cardinal de Lorraine had gone

on a mission to Rome, and in his suite was his favourite Brusquet, who had the royal sanction to follow his Eminence. The Legation had not been long within the walls of Rome, when intelligence of the death of the King's "plaisant" reached Paris, by especial courier. The latter carried with him a duly attested document, the jester's last will. It was the most singular of deeds, for therein the testator willed or prayed that the King should permit the wife of Brusquet to retain the office held previously by her husband,—that of Superintendent-General of Posting,—on one condition, namely, that she espoused his friend the courier, who was the bearer of the news and the testamentary paper. It was thought that nothing could possibly be more appropriate than this dying act of a court fool. The thing was resolved upon, and the wife of Brusquet, who had no children, except a married daughter, was forced, persuaded, or cajoled, till she consented to marry the courier, —in order that she might preserve a lucrative office.

The wedded pair had already kept house for a month when Brusquet (who was daily electrifying the Papal Court by his mirthfulness or impudence) suddenly learned the news of his death, and of the indecently hasty marriage of his not altogether disconsolate widow. He was in exceeding wrath, hurried back to Paris, turned the second husband into the street, chastised his wife, and then publicly remarried her! Court, camp, and city considered this last act as one more in the official character of the fool than any he had hitherto accomplished, and the hilarity was general and unbounded. Brusquet, however, only showed that his wit had departed, for he attempted to avenge himself by conveying false information to the Court of Rome as to alleged traitorous intentions of Strozzi against the states and property of the Church. He represented the Marshal as having fallen into disgrace, and, after flying from France, having joined an Algerine force destined to operate succes-

sively against Ostia, Civita Vecchia, and Ancona, and ultimately to plunder the wealthy shrine of Loretto. The Roman Government was only needlessly alarmed, and Brusquet only suffered for his accusation of another.

There can be little doubt that his old personal enemy brought down upon him the calamity by which he was visited in 1562. In the very midst of much worldly prosperity, he found himself accused of a very serious crime, that of being a Huguenot, and, still worse, that of suppressing or delaying despatches which contained news unfavourable to the Huguenot cause. The accusation would seem to have been better founded as regards Brusquet's son-in-law. The storm, however, fell most heavily upon the former. He was obliged to fly, and the orthodox populace plundered the house which the heretical court fool had abandoned with so much precipitation.

The fugitive jester found a home, first at Nogent, with Madame de Bouillon, a great friend of the Huguenots, and, subsequently, with Madame de Valentinois. But to be a concealed, fugitive dependant was little to the humour of a man who had made three kings laugh, and whose jokes had for so long a period been accepted as apologies or excuses for much rascality. He stooped to beseech his adversary, Strozzi, in a letter shown by the latter to Brantôme, who describes it as very well expressed, to use his influence with the authorities, to enable him, an odd man, to end his days in Paris, in peace and quietness. The petition was unheeded; at all events, the petitioner drew no benefit from it. He lost all heart, patience, and health, sank into moody despair, and died at the château of Anet, the guest of Madame de Valentinois, in the year 1563.

If there be any of Brusquet's descendants living, they belong to their illustrious ancestor through his daughter. It is popularly said, that when Thoni (one of the fools of Henry II.) died, the principal poets of the day applied for

the vacant post. This shows, as I have before remarked, that the suggestion of Ménage, that the court poet and court fool often consisted of one and the same person, is not to be summarily rejected. The poets probably were not such fools as to neglect the present opportunity, which offered them the chance of a lucrative social appointment; with that of the less richly paid office of *plaisant* to the King.

I have in a previous page noticed the sharp wit of some of the ladies at the court of Catherine de Medicis. I may here add, that such wit was sometimes very sharply reprehended. Mr. Bayle St. John, in his biography of Montaigne, affords me an illustration of this fact, by there recording the circumstance of one of the maids-of-honour, Mademoiselle de Limeuil, who wrote a laughable satire on the Queen Catherine; by whom it was accounted but a sorry court jest, and the sprightly young authoress was well whipped, like any coarse male fool, for her pains. Mr. St. John records also a fact which proves that the jest of the "fou" was not always the most acceptable sauce at a royal banquet. The fact alluded to refers to Duchatel, who was originally in a printer's office, was ultimately Grand Almoner of France, and who, as Mr. St. John tells us, was paid by the King to talk to him during meals.

It is a singular fact, that while Francis I., who had a great affection for jesters, was mentioned in the funeral oration pronounced over his remains, as a grave, learned, and philosophic prince, Charles IX., who cared nothing for those old, joyous appendages to court, and whose name is associated with everything gloomy and terrible, was celebrated in the sermon preached at *his* interment by Father Sorbin, as a prince at once tender-hearted and gracious, the bulwark of the faith, and the lover of men of wit: "piteux et débonnaire, propugnateur de la foy, et amateur des bons esprits." Charles may be said to have been, in some measure,

his own fool, for we hear of him figuring at a tournament, with a party of joyous followers, all of whom, King and courtiers, fought in the lists attired as women. Another of his court jests consisted in his hiring ten young thieves, whom he brought to the Louvre, where he set them to rob the guests of their swords, jewellery, and splendid cloaks, laughing heartily the while, as he witnessed their success, or saw the unconsciousness of the victims, or beheld their surprise and indignation, after they had been despoiled. These young thieves, who were amply rewarded for the exercise of their ability, rank among the most singular of hirelings paid to excite laughter in a gloomy king.

Henri III. was an especial patron of the "fou," and some of the best specimens of the latter class figured at his court. The most renowned of these were Sibilot and John (or Sebastian) Chicot. The name of the former became, for a time, the generic name for a witty fool, and to be a "Sibilot" was to be a jester of the highest quality. It was even said of the aspiring and conspiring Duke de Mayenne, that he wanted only troops and a Sibilot to be as great a man as the King.

It was an act of this turbulent Duke of the house of Lorraine which first brought Chicot into notice. Cardinal Perron, in his 'Perroniana,' published at Cologne, 1694, speaks in high praise of this Gascon gentleman; for the latter was *De* Chicot, and proud of the prefix, before he descended to plain Chicot, and became "fou du Roi."

Like most Gascons, Chicot was poor; but he seems to have first repaired to court not so much with the intention of pushing his fortune as seeking protection against the manners and rough usages of the Duke de Mayenne, who looked with favour on a lady who was the object also of the homage of the tall and humorous Gascon. The mirth inspired by the sallies of Chicot soon attracted the notice of the King, and the quaint fellow speedily discovered that he might turn

his wit to more profitable use at the Louvre and at Fontainebleau than he could his industry devoted to any professional pursuit in Paris. The last biographer of Chicot, in the 'Nouvelle Dictionnaire Biographique,' refers to the portrait of the celebrated buffoon drawn by Dumas, in his 'Dame de Monsoreau,' as preserving the traditionary features of Chicot's manners, aspect, and character. In the work just named, the author adopts the tradition of the love-affair, in which the Lorrainer and the Gascon were rivals; and M. Dumas further intimates that when Chicot became official jester he found solace for his disappointment, in mimicking the manners of his master. To the buffoon who would stand with his cheeks puffed out, and his hand on his side, the nobles would pay court as to the true King, while Chicot feigned to treat the latter as his jester. If the nobles winced under the sarcastic speeches of the "fou," and threatened vengeance, Henri would protect him, in his character alike of fool and gentleman; and in return, Chicot took an infinite delight in countermanding orders issued by Henri; and, standing at the King's toilette, thought nothing of dipping his fingers into the monarch's perfumed cream, and tearing the royal combs through his rough beard. It was only when Henri was religiously scourging himself, and when Chicot was consequently most inclined to jest, that the sovereign would tolerate no ribaldry. At those times, the buffoon might, if he liked, go and fight duels, whips being the weapons, with gentlemen who had too much leisure and too little pastime. Or he would resort to some tavern outside the barrier, swallow delicious teal with crab-sauce, address himself to joyous drinking, and return to court when it suited his caprice; for Chicot seems to have been exempt from the rule by which the French official fool was bound to remain within the precincts of the palace.

At times, the King would appeal to Chicot, not as his jester, but as a man of sense, and his friend. Chicot, on the

other hand, would make suggestions worth adopting, and quote from books in support of his advice or opinions. The familiarity of the two was so great, that they often slept in the same room; and by day travelled in the same litter, drawn by half-a-dozen mules, or where the roads were difficult, by as many oxen. The state in which King and fool journeyed is thus admirably sketched by Dumas, in the work mentioned above. "The litter contained Henri, his physician, his chaplain, the jester, four of the King's 'minions,' a couple of huge hounds, and a basketful of puppies, which rested on the King's knees, but which was upheld from his neck by a gold chain. From the roof hung a gilded cage, in which were white turtle-doves, the plumage of their necks marked by a sable circlet of feathers. Occasionally, two or three apes were to be seen in this 'Noah's Ark,' as it was called," some of the inmates of which used to amuse themselves by plaiting ribbons, while Chicot made anagrams on the names of the courtiers.

Able as Chicot was in this respect, and expert in quoting Marco Polo, Galen, and sentences from the Breviary, it may, of course, be questioned whether he was so skilful in his dramatic plottings and counter-plottings against the traitorous Guises as M. Dumas has represented him to be. He probably did not meddle in such serious affairs; and I think the ability of the jester is set too high when he is exhibited in positions that would puzzle a Machiavelli, in disguises that have a very melodramatic tone and aspect, and in situations of peril from which he releases himself as dexterously as the virtuous hero of a transpontine semi-tragedy. Chicot, indeed, was well qualified to effect his release from any peril where odds were not very strongly against him, for the jester was in the habit of daily fencing with the King, and bore the reputation of being one of the best swordsmen in the kingdom. He could apply his cunning of fence to excellent purpose; and

if, half in sport, he would engage with noble courtiers in a fight with whips, there was no man, at once insulted, vindictive, and self-possessed, who could more politely and fatally pass his sword through the body of the individual from whom he had suffered wrong. The tongue of Chicot could be as sharp as his sword, and it inflicted, perhaps, more exquisite torture on the nobles whom he hated or the courtiers whom he despised, than if he had passed his blade between the ribs, which he would "poke" with as much audacity as he used when, seating himself on the same royal chair with the King, he would call him *Henriquet*, and greedily devour the dainties presented to his master. At the council-board too Chicot was often present, where his wit worked as profitably as that of any grave-looking member present; albeit, while he enunciated his profound political maxims, he was perhaps engaged in making paper boats, and arranging them into a fleet. On the most serious occasions, a sally from Chicot at the head of the table, would cause the King to laugh. Solemn statesmen would then look grave, and while the royal laughter was yet pealing, Chicot would utter a stentorian "*Silence there!*" which would cause the King to suddenly close his mouth, and the councillors to open theirs, moved, in spite of themselves, to lively hilarity.

By way of sample of what was then probably considered a rather neat joke, and showing how Henri profited by being constantly in company with Chicot, I may cite the traditionary incident of the monk preaching from the back of an ass. "Which is the preacher?" said the King, "for they both speak at the same time." "The one beneath is the most eloquent," replied Chicot, "but the uppermost one speaks the best French." The power wielded by this influential buffoon is also indicated by M. Dumas, in the observation made by the former when he learns a most important State secret which he resolves to keep to himself.

"Why should I communicate it to any one else?" said he, "Is it not I who am King of France?" He had mimicked his master so often, that he almost thought himself king;—like Elliston when, in tipsy majesty, he represented George IV. at the Drury Lane coronation, and hiccupped benedictions on the heads of his laughing subjects in the pit. With Chicot, however, the case was less imaginary; for when Henri was about to take a fatal step, a sign from the jester would set him right, and the gentleman buffoon might then have been justified in exclaiming, "Did I not say rightly, that *I* was the real King in France?" We may fancy him, on his long legs, saying this, and by raising himself, looking longer than ever.

Here is not quite an imaginary picture of the wisdom of the "*fou*," as he looks over a chess-board at which he is sitting alone, meditating the while on the dangers threatening Henri III. To one who questions him, he replies, "I am disquieted about the King. At chess, you see, the King is but an insignificant personage. He has no will of his own; can only move one step forward or back; one step to the right or to the left, while he is surrounded by foes on the alert; by knights who jump three squares at a time; by a mob of pawns, who close round him; and if he be only ill-advised, he is a lost and ruined king in no time."

It is the great merit of Chicot, if Dumas has painted him faithfully, that he was not merely the "plaisant" of the King, but his protector. He could be, and ordinarily was, indifferent and sarcastic in look, speech, and general demeanour; but this gentleman-jester, with a sword on his thigh, and a duty to perform to Henri, could also be as eloquent, and put on an air as noble as any great man with countless quarterings on his shield. We may conclude, from the limning of the traditionary portrait in the 'Dame de Monsoreau,' that if Chicot loved his jest well, he loved his king (worthless as he was) even better.

Again, if we turn to 'Les Quarante-Cinq,' in search of further information touching the qualities of this famous *plaisant*, we find him brave and careless, and yet fully appreciating life generally, which came to him in a very enjoyable form. In this latter work, we find him loving wine, and eccentric in act and speech. He was not close cropped, or shaven, like the earlier jesters. His hair was black and curled, but his brow was bald long before the period of middle age. He brought to perfection, says the author of 'Les Quarante-Cinq,' "that art dear to the ancient mimes, which consists in changing, by scientific contractions, the natural play of the muscles, and the habitual play of the physiognomy."

Chicot cannot be said to have been a graceful fellow. His arms and legs were immoderately long. He was all nerves, muscle, and bone; active, addicted to raillery, ingenious in contrivances, and he laughed silently like an Indian. After having been prodigal, he became parsimonious, and saved a little fortune. He ordinarily spoke with a Gascon accent, but he could change that at will, and it was as easy for him to assume any other as it was for him to assume any rank. He maintained a superiority over his royal master through the fears of the latter, and the author of 'Les Quarante-Cinq' represents Henri as having a superstitious dread of his jester, who was occasionally a sort of phantom-buffoon, suddenly appearing and disappearing in a way which perplexed Henri, but which admitted of very natural explanations. We see him in the last-mentioned work, as a scholar and a man of taste, a purist in classical knowledge, able to construe Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and reading, and sometimes sleeping over, the Essays of Montaigne.

Had this jester not been a man of singular ability, the King would not have employed him on diplomatic missions of some delicacy and difficulty. He went on such missions to Henri of Navarre; and Dumas represents him to us as

saving the life of the Béarnais, in his first fight at Cahors, where Henri's bold soul carried his then cowardly body into the very thickest of the *mêlée*. It is said to have been on this occasion that the King of Navarre induced Chicot to promise to enter his service whenever his old master, Henri III., should die. Flögel, Cardinal Perron, and Sully, only mention Chicot as the court jester of Henri IV; he was however in the service of both Kings. He was as familiar with his new master as with the old one, and the Bourbon King was as indulgent to him as the old Valois monarch had been. His boldness was especially exhibited in satirical allusions to the King of Navarre being of the reformed religion, and to suggestions touching political matters generally. In the 'Mémoires pour l'Histoire de France' (vol. ii. 72), it is stated that when the Duke of Parma came to France, Chicot said to the King, before all the courtiers, "My friend, I see very well that all you do will signify nothing, unless you either turn Catholic, or pretend you are one." Another time, Chicot said to him, "I am convinced that to be peaceably King of France, you would give both Papists and Huguenots to Lucifer's clerk." "I am not surprised," said he another time to his Majesty, "that so many persons desire to be Kings. It is a good trade, and by working at it only an hour in a day, one may make sufficient provision for the rest of the week, without being obliged to one's neighbours. But, for Heaven's sake! my friend, take care, and keep out of the hands of the Leaguers, for if you should fall into them, they would hang you up like a hog's pudding, and write upon your gibbet—'Good lodgings to let, at the Crown of France and Navarre.'"

Of such quality was the bold humour of Chicot. Of his bravery, we have an instance in his conduct at the siege of Rouen, where he behaved so gallantly that he made Henri of Lorraine, Count of Chaligny, prisoner with his own hand.

He led his captive to the King, saying to the latter, "Here, I make you a present of the Count; keep what I took, and now give you." The Count was so enraged at being captured by a court fool, that he smote poor Chicot on the head, so violently, with the hilt of his sword, that the jester died of the cruel blow, after lingering for a fortnight. During this latter period, a dying Huguenot soldier shared his room. A priest visited the Huguenot, but, at the moment of his dying, refused to administer consolation, on the ground of his being a heretic. The orthodox Chicot could not witness this with patience. Weak as he was, he arose to chastise the priest for his lack of charity; but he was too feeble for the achievement, and he returned to bed, only to die. The honest Gascon thus ended his life, and his last act exhibits, as much as anything, the daring and impatience of his character.

Contemporary with the Gascon Chicot, was the Norman Maître Guillaume Le Marchand, a dreaming half-witted fellow, who passed from the household of the Cardinal of Bourbon to be "fou" in that of Henry IV. Master Guillaume was accustomed to say that God created angels, but the devil made pages. These last never lost an opportunity of tormenting the "natural," who was quite as active in taking advantage of every occasion to revenge himself. He would then take out his "little bird," as he called his cudgel, pretty well break the bones of the offending page, and would roar all the time, as if he himself were being beaten. Guillaume was a Roman Catholic, like Chicot, but he was less tolerant. He so hated the reformed religion, and the Reformation itself, that he always used the words "ruined religion," or the "Ruin," to show a fool's contempt for what he could not understand.

The King certainly did not value him as he valued Chicot. When any one uttered an opinion in his hearing, unsupported by reason, Henry was accustomed to bid them go and keep company with Master Guillaume. The Paris

gamins were in the habit of hooting him in the streets, and noble counts made little of employing him to scare away a whole saloon-full of ladies by the performance of some beastly trick. Even Cardinals would condescend to argue with this Norman fool, and boast of victories in disputes where there was small common sense and less wit on either side, and little honour to be gained by triumphing over a "natural."

As a companion to Guillaume, the name of Pierre du Four l'Evêque is met with; but he was a street fool, and not a "fou à titre d'office." Under their names, and that of Chicot, some of the best political satires of this period were published. The author could not safely print his own name; and he found not only safety but profit in publishing his book under the name of some more popular fool.

Some authors rank Joubert, surnamed Angoulevent, with the court fools of Henri IV. The surname was common to some of the clubs or memberships which met under the inspiration of Folly. Joubert was president of some such society. He called himself "noble" and "gentleman of the King's chamber;" but this was in joke, for Joubert seems to have been connected with the theatre at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. His title of "Prince of Fools" procured for him some privileges granted by the Parliament, and some protection at the tribunals of law and justice. This is explained at great length by Du Tillot, and also by Dr. Rigollet, in their respective works on this subject. Joubert was probably a well-esteemed *farceur*, but I only find him once in connection with Henri IV., namely, when a woman committed suicide by hanging herself, and the King gave her property, forfeited to the crown by the felonious act, to Joubert, "surnamed Angoulement, Prince of Fools."

Chicot, with his Gascon accent, was accustomed to excite the laughter of the courts of Henri III. and Henri IV. Maret, the servant and *plaisant* of Louis XIII. tried to

effect the same object by imitating the Gascon twang of Gascon nobles. Even Richelieu once imitated this bad example, bidding the Duke d'Espernon to get rid of his provincial accent, and at the same time speaking with that accent himself. The Cardinal ended by hoping that the Duke would not be offended. "Why should I take offence at it?" said the Duke; "it is only what the King's fool does in my hearing every day."

Maret showed more jealousy than wit, when the King's page Bravadas was suddenly preferred to be the friend and playfellow of Louis. At dinner, on the day when this sudden growth of favour was first made manifest, the fool, pointing to some mushrooms, bade the lacquey bring him "a spoonful of *Bravadas*." On many of the royal customs this jester was trenchant enough, particularly on the custom observed by the King, of eating alone; while other customs were observed by him only when surrounded by a circle of courtiers. "Voilà deux choses de votre métier," said Maret, "dont je ne pourrois jamais m'accommoder."

At the same court with Maret, and accounted as a fool, but not decorated with, or stigmatized by, the official title, we find, attached to the King's brother, Gaston of Orléans, Louis de Neufgermain, a man whose silliness and vanity made him the sport of the court, and whose affected skill in poetry acquired for him the appellation, which he seriously accepted and proudly displayed, of "Poëte Hétéroclite to his royal highness the Duke of Orleans." This very select poet penned rhymes which would not be acknowledged in the bon-bon Parnassus of the Rue des Lombards. They were execrable and pointless. For the most part they consisted of lines which he supplied to words given to him, for which he was to find rhymes. It was the sport of the court to puzzle him by intractable words, such as in English would be *orange* and *month*; and to extricate himself from the difficulty, he wrote the wildest nonsense,

and the wilder this was, the more the audience laughed at the fool.

With Louis XIV. we approach the last of the French "plaisants." As Margaret of Navarre had Guerin to make lively her leisure hours, so the consort of Louis XIV. maintained Tricomini, who was hardly amusing. He was remarkable more for rough, unpalatable, but irrefutable truths than for wit; and we pass him by, to notice L'Angeli, whose greatest honour it is that he is named by Boileau, in a way too which shows how fortunate a fool was the last of the official jesters of France.

> "Un poëte à la cour fut jadis à la mode,
> Mais des Fous aujourd'hui c'est le plus incommode,
> Et l'esprit le plus beau, l'auteur le plus poli,
> Ne parviendra jamais au sort de l'Angeli."

L'Angeli was of a good family, but the branch of it to which he belonged was so decayed, that the bearer of the name was glad to follow the Prince of Condé to Flanders in the humble capacity of a stable-boy. The lad excited notice by his satire and wit, and Condé, on his return from Flanders, could think of no more acceptable gift to present to the King, Louis XIII., than his vivacious stable-boy. The latter rose to fortune, especially in the succeeding reign, when he became the salaried and official jester, and amassed a fortune. If the courtiers wanted a joke from him, he first made them pay for it. If they wanted to escape his sarcasm, Angeli would not pronounce them exempt, without a fee. What he thus pocketed he carefully put by. Altogether, he was a well-regulated fellow, save in the matter of attendance at church; for absenting himself from which, he assigned two fool's reasons, namely, that he could not endure brawling, and did not understand argument. When he had acquired some five-and-twenty thousand crowns by the exercise of his office at court, his proud relatives began to acknowledge their long-neglected kinsman: Angeli only

laughed, and went on increasing his fortune. "Of all us fools," once exclaimed Marigny, as he saw Louis XIV. laughing at the jester's light words,—"of all us fools who were attached to the Prince of Condé, Angeli is the only one who has made his fortune."

This "fou" had a quiet as well as a lively wit. On one occasion, finding himself standing by the side of a nobleman, one of whose ancestors was supposed to have been a buffoon: "Cousin," said Angeli, "let us both sit down, nobody will pay any particular attention to *us;* and you and I are not likely to take offence from each other." L'Angeli died in 1640, just three years after Archie Armstrong had been ejected from the English court.

With L'Angeli ordinarily closes the list of officially titled fools in France; but I learn from the learned author of the work on the medals and tokens of societies connected with fools and follies, that the Count of Toulouse, the illegitimate son of Louis, had a fool officially appointed to exercise his calling in the Count's household. The author in question most provokingly adds, that "there was one anecdote he could tell of this fool, which would suffice to avenge the whole class of fools of the contempt with which we cover them. The history is unpublished and piquant, but," again adds this writer, "it does not belong to me; and that is all I can say about it, *for the moment;*"—and he never alludes to it again throughout his book!

Although Louis XIV. appointed no successor to L'Angeli, it is clear that he continued to be pleased with tricks after the court jester's fashion. We have this exemplified in the case of that elegant but inconstant lover, Vardis, who, after throwing the whole court and household of the King into confusion by his audacious gallantries, was exiled to Provence, where, for nearly thirty years, he continued to be the delight of the women and the detestation of the men, who envied and could not rival him.

At the end of the time above mentioned, the Count, then almost a sexagenarian, received permission from the Government, to return to Paris. Vardis was still uncertain how he might be received by the King, and his very happiness depended on the nature of such reception. He went boldly down to Versailles, and on entering the presence, he had the gratification of seeing King and courtiers burst into uncontrollable peals of laughter. He had prepared himself to produce so desired a result, by appearing at court in a dress which was the very height of the fashion when he began his exile, but which looked so ridiculous now, that I do not know how I can better illustrate it than by asking any matron who has preserved her bridal bonnet and dress of thirty years ago, what she thinks she would look like, if she were to wear the same at her youngest daughter's wedding-breakfast. Let any gentleman open a book of fashions of 1828, and say if he would be daring enough to enter Hyde Park in such a costume. The appearance of Vardis was still more ridiculous. He had been to his contemporaries what D'Orsay was within our own remembrance; and he returned to court, the King of Fashion, but a King who had been touched by a fairy's wand, and had been lain asleep as soundly and as long as Rip van Winkle. His head was a perfect caricature, and he wore one of those blue coats, or tunics, embroidered with gold and silver lace, which had the name of a "justaucorps à brevet," because no person could wear this article of dress, which the King himself wore, without his Majesty's *brevet*, or warrant. Louis rolled in ecstasy at the sight of the old portrait; and the happy Vardis exclaimed, "Ah, Sire, absent from your Majesty, one becomes not only unhappy, but ridiculous." The King, still laughing, presented him to the Dauphin, to whom Vardis offered the homage of a low bow. Louis laughed again, remarking, "Vardis, you have done the act of a fool; you know that no person can salute another in my pre-

sence." "Oh!" cried Vardis, with an air that would have done credit to the official fool, "I know nothing at all. I have forgotten everything. *One* act of folly? your Majesty must pardon thirty." "Be it so," answered the King; "but stop at nine-and-twenty." And with this *coup de fou* did Vardis leap into a little brief favour.

I must not dismiss the reign of Louis XIV. without a word in reference to the Duke de Roquelaure, who figures in so many jest-books as a buffoon at the court of Louis XIV. The Duke is indebted for much of his reputation, as to this matter, to Saint-Simon, who hated him heartily, and misrepresented him accordingly. Roquelaure was a plain, brave, facetious man; but the jokes attributed to him in the 'Momus Français' are entirely apocryphal. These represent him as disgustingly insulting to ladies, audacious to the highest clergy, regardless of his own honour or of that of his wife, and so forgetful of reverence due to holy places, as, on one occasion, to have jumped out of bed, run into a church, and there beat the Spanish Ambassador about the head with his slippers. According to the 'Momus,' no courtier escaped the rough licking of his tongue; though the Duke, who had little or no nose, sometimes had to undergo more painful allusions than he himself made, from courtiers or prelates whose huge noses were points on which he is said to have sharpened his wit. The last court-foolery told of him is, of his having asserted that he would not only kick a certain courtier, Bechamel, but that the latter would thank him for it. He committed the assault, saluting the victim at the same time, as if he had been the handsome De Grammont. Bechamel was so delighted at being mistaken, as he thought, for so brilliant a cavalier, that he turned round with radiant smiles, and thanked Roquelaure for the error into which he had fallen.

As I have said, I could not entirely pass over Roquelaure; and it is on the authority of his biographer in the

'Biographie Universelle,' I have stated that his court jests are apocryphal. Worse jokes, however, than these were perpetrated at the court of Louis XIV.; witness that occasion when the French court was at Fère, very dull, and sadly in want of sport. Cardinal Mazarin then undertook to play the fool for it; and he did so after a fashion that was highly enjoyed by the "people of quality." There was then residing with the Cardinal the youngest of his nieces, a little girl seven or eight years of age, Marianne Mancini, afterwards Duchess de Bouillon. As an illustration of court-foolery, the incident requires to be told, and I prefer giving the opening portion of it in the words of M. Amédée Renée, from whose book on 'Les Nièces de Mazarin,' I make the extract:—

"Le Cardinal, une après-dînée, se mit à plaisanter la nièce sur ses galants. Il alla jusqu'à lui dire qu'elle etoit grosse. Marianne se fâcha tout rouge, et l'oncle de s'en amuser si bien qu'il continua la plaisanterie. On retrécit les robes de l'enfant, pour lui faire croire que sa taille s'arrondissait. Ses colères divertissaient toute la cour. Il n'était question que de son prochain accouchement, et Marianne, un beau matin, trouva dans ses draps un enfant qui venait de naître. Il fallut bien convenir alors de sa maternité. Elle jeta des cris de désespoir, et fit chorus longtemps avec son nouveau-né; elle assurait fort qu'elle ne s'était aperçu de rien." To the child thus fooled, the Queen-mother, Anne of Austria, paid a visit of ceremony, and begged to be allowed to be godmother to the baby! The entire court turned fools on this occasion, waited on the imaginary mother in great pomp, and passed in ceremonious rotation before the bed, according to prescribed etiquette; and these fine people were in ecstasies! The elder sister of Marianne, Hortense, Duchess of Mazarin, says in her autobiography, of which not she, but St. Réal, was the author, "Ce fut un divertissement public. On pressa Marianne de déclarer le père de

l'enfant, et elle répondit que ce ne pouvait être que le Roi ou le Comte de Guiche, car elle ne voyoit que ces deux hommes-là qui l'eussent embrassé." Hortense, who was, as M. Renée remarks, "au courant de la chose," testified her enjoyment of the joke by loud bursts of laughter. The court thought there had never been so choice a jester as the Cardinal; for of such complexion were the jokes of that time, and in this manner did fools of quality prepare the minds of little girls for this world and the next.

As true wit however was found among the nobles and gentlemen at the court of the Grand Monarque as ever had been uttered by the liveliest of professional jesters. Sydney Smith, in his Lectures on Moral Philosophy, cites a sample which is of such excellence as to have received his high approbation. "Louis XIV.," he says, "was exceedingly molested by the solicitations of a general officer at the levée, and cried out, loud enough to be heard, 'That gentleman is the most troublesome officer in the whole army.' 'Your Majesty's enemies have said the same thing more than once,' was the answer; the wit of which," adds the narrator, "consists in the sudden relation discovered in the officer's assent to the King's invective, and his own defence. By admitting the King's observation, he seems, at first sight, to be subscribing to the King's imputation against him; whereas, in reality, he effaces it by this very means."

Louis XIV. was yet in his youth when Mazarin introduced a new source whence idle, wealthy people might derive amusement. The Cardinal filled *his* palace with monkeys, that is, there was scarcely a room which had not in it one of these tricksy animals, to afford laughter to the occupant or visitor. They were carefully tended and highly scented by the nieces of Mazarin, those celebrated ladies whom satirists distinguished by the name of Mazarinettes. They are thus alluded to in 'Le Passeport et l'Adieu de Mazarin.'

"Ainsi donc par vos limonades,
Par vos excellentes pommades,
Par la bonne odeur de vos gants,
. . . . . .
Par les singes que tant aimez,
Qui, comme vous, sont parfumés
Par les belles Mazarinettes," etc.

The fashion of finding amusement in keeping monkeys was, however, of very old date. Plutarch tells us, that when Cæsar happened once to see some strangers at Rome carrying young dogs and monkeys in their arms, caressing them, he asked, 'Whether the women in their country never bore any children?' thus reproving those who lavish on brutes the natural tenderness which is due to mankind. The only case in which I can remember that monkeys were made useful, is that of the Abbé Galiani, whose monkey used to unseal all his letters for him. Galiani used to call him "a member of the diplomatic body."

Although the jester by right of office, had disappeared from the French court, we occasionally meet with amateur fools who presumed to hint censure at the monarch, but who found the King with more censorious wit than themselves. This was the case when Latour was taking the portrait of Louis XV. It was just after a national calamity. Latour, with the impudent familiarity of Triboulet, exclaimed, "Well, Sire, so we have no longer any navy!" "And Vernet?" coldly replied the King,—alluding to the marine painter whom he patronized, and who could furnish him any amount of fleets on and under canvas.

If Louis XV. had not altogether the ever-ready wit necessary to a jester, he possessed all the imperturbability of the fool. An instance presents itself in the little court incident, when M. de Chauvelin was seized at the royal card-table with the fit of apoplexy of which he died. On seeing him fall, some one exclaimed, "M. de Chauvelin is ill!" "Ill?" said the King, coldly turning round and

looking at him; "he is dead. Take him away; spades are trumps, gentlemen!"

Neither did this sovereign maintain an official jester; as before intimated, the vocation of the fool had ceased, but the favour and freedom he had enjoyed were acquired by men who, as Chesterfield remarks of the Marshal Duke of Richelieu, raised themselves above their betters, without knowledge, talent, or merit. The Duke, however, whom Louis XV. used to call his "amiable Good-for-nothing," had certainly some claim to be ranked as a court wit. He proved as much when Louis, on one occasion, remarked that there was not such another "good-for-nothing" in all France. "Ah, Sire," said the Duke with a tone of kindly reproach, "Your Majesty forgets yourself!" Triboulet never said anything half so good.

Here I will close the record of French *plaisants*. The "*plaisantes*" of Louis XV. have no claim to admission upon my list; and at the court of his successors, the time had come when princes had begun to be their own fools. The Republic lowered "Liberty" to the level of fool, and the people paid dearly for their *marotte*. With the Empire, the nation had again its fool, under the name of "Glory;" a costly toy which brought a splendid misery. How Louis Philippe could be his own jester, I shall have to show in a subsequent page. At the present Imperial Court, there is no official fool; but some persons may perhaps discover the Emperor's "joculator" in that wonderful man, the Count de Morny, whose last joke consisted in his telling the Imperial Legislature that the utmost purity of election had brought them there, and that the utmost freedom of speech was their undoubted privilege. That the Count could say as much to the Members without, as the French say, "laughing at their noses," demonstrates how admirably he is qualified to be "joculator" to the Empire at large.

The Count's name, too, is so associated with that of Russia, that, *apropos* to court fools, I will now ask my readers to turn with me towards Muscovy, and see how fools have flourished at the court of the Czars, and, indeed, in the Northern courts of Europe generally.

JESTERS IN THE NORTHERN COURTS OF EUROPE.

Of all the courts, civilized or uncivilized, at which fools have been numbered on the household, the jester was never in so uncomfortable a purgatory as in the household of the Czars. The most savage, the most able, but it would be hard to say the most mendacious, of these potentates, was Ivan Vasilievitch IV., who reigned from 1533 to 1581. He might, for various reasons, be reckoned amongst the princes who were their own fools,—for some of his acts savoured greatly of the profession; at least, there was more folly than wit in some of this gloomy monster's merry conceits; as, for instance, when he invited a number of guests to dinner, and set before them a repast of dog, cat, and even human flesh. His fools must have had a terrible time of it; and how they could ever be gamesome in presence of such a capricious savage is inconceivable. Occasionally, the unclean Czar was minded to be delicate, and then he would take offence at what he generally seemed most to delight in. Once, his favourite fool, not knowing the bent of his master's humour, was indulging at table in very unsavory jests; and the gentle Ivan ordered him to leave the room. A few minutes later, the Czar commanded him to return, and to kneel before him. The jester obeyed, and his gracious master, taking up a kettle of scalding hot broth, poured the whole down the back of the fool, between his clothes and his skin. The wretched victim screamed in his agony, and writhed under the torture. Ivan had the grace to bid his doctor look to him, but Esculapius himself could not

have saved him. The fool died; and all the requiem chanted over him by his imperious master was,—"Since the fool did not choose to live; why, let him be buried."

For many a long year, the Russian joculators that were the most highly prized were hideous, overfed, sleepy idiots, with nothing remarkable about them but their want of wit. Beyond the record of this fact, there is little worth noticing till we arrive at the reign of Peter the Great, who, according to Weber, quoted by Flögel, maintained about him not less than a hundred persons who might be classed under the head of court fools. They were of various qualities; some had been born imbecile, and these he entirely supported, making use of them occasionally as examples to his courtiers, comparing the natural condition of each, and drawing therefrom a moral teaching content. Others of the class were officials who, having committed some gross act of folly, he punished by compelling them to wear the dress of a fool, to take the name, and fulfil to the best of their small wit, the business of such profession. A third class, if two or three individuals may be so called, comprised persons who, having been guilty of some serious offence, thought to avoid the penalty by feigning madness, and were consequently seriously treated as such.

Among the second class noticed above, was a Captain Uschakow, who was promoted or degraded to the rank of court fool for the following exhibition of his quality. The Captain had been despatched by the commandant of Smolensko with an important letter addressed to the governor of Kiov, and requiring an immediate reply. He was ordered to traverse the sixty leagues which lie between those cities, as fast as his horse could carry him; and he obeyed the order faithfully, arriving at the gates of Kiov before break of day. On application for admission, some delay ensued, the officer on duty informing him that he must wait till the

keys could be procured from the commandant, who was then asleep. Uschakow, in great rage, said his letter was of the utmost importance, and that if he were not immediately admitted, he would gallop back to Smolensko and lay a complaint before the commandant who had sent him. The officer thought he was joking; but his surprise was great to see the impatient captain turn his horse's head and disappear, at full speed, through the morning mist. When Uschakow came in presence of his superior officer at Smolensko, carrying the letter instead of the expected reply, and stated what had occurred, the commandant, after showering upon him every invective he could think of, sent him to the Czar, with orders to tell his own story. Peter no sooner heard it, than he immediately ordered Uschakow to be cashiered, and enrolled among the court fools. So far from this being a punishment, it was the luckiest thing that could happen to a man of the mental calibre of the captain. He took to his new office with hearty good will; by his frolicsome humour he was welcomed to several European courts; and he very speedily saved not less than 20,000 thalers out of the presents made to him. He accompanied Peter in most of his visits to brother potentates; and on one of these occasions he was present, with the Czar and the King of Poland, at the theatre at Dresden. Some interruption occurred on the stage, previous to the appearance of a Scaramouch, who was announced to dance a buffoon *pas seul*, called "Les Follies d'Espagne." Impatient at the delay, Uschakow jumped lightly from the royal box on to the stage, and to the astonishment and delight of the entire house, went through the whole dance himself, with additional quips, and cranks, and absurd follies, which kept the illustrious spectators in a roar of laughter.

There were two brothers of a princely family who did not enjoy the promotion to the rank of Witless so unreservedly as Uschakow had done. Flögel does not give their names,

nor state whence he derives the story, which is to this effect. The brothers had joined a conspiracy, the object of which was to slay the Czar; but which, being discovered, and the principal plotters summarily hanged, the brothers found that their turn for responsibility had arrived. This they endeavoured to avoid by feigning a comic sort of madness; and when this was reported to Peter, he granted them their lives, but decreed that in every subsequent act of theirs they should be held to be as mad as they had pretended to be, and treated acccordingly. This novel species of torture does not seem very intolerable, but as they were retained at court, the brothers found it past endurance. One of them sank into a deep melancholy, and the other drank himself into raging madness, in order to forget that men accounted him mad.

Peter, who judged so terribly of others, once submitted to judgment himself. In a fit of frolicsome humour, he one evening placed one of his jolly companions on the throne, before which the Czar stood to give an account of his actions. At the side of the throne stood Peter's favourite fool, who made running comments on every phrase uttered by the real or the pseudo-Czar, in the style of the ancient Chorus, or rather in the merry fashion of Mr. Charles Mathews when representing the ancient Chorus in a burlesque at the Haymarket. Peter came indifferently off in presence of a judge and fool both of whom, having full license of speech, used their liberty to the utmost, amid the risibility of an ecstatic audience.

It is well known how Peter loved to play other parts besides that of Czar. When, in London, he went to a masked ball at the Temple, he appeared in the costume of a butcher. So he is described in Luttrell's Diary. We find a trait still more illustrative of his character, in connection with a Christmas incident in his own country. Formerly, we are told, there was a ceremony in Russia called "Slae-

vens." It consisted of a sledge procession which took place between Christmas and the New Year, in which the clergy, splendidly attended, stopped at certain houses, sang a *Te Deum laudamus* or an occasional carol, and received in return rich donations from those who wished to be considered peculiarly orthodox Christians. Peter the Great once witnessed this procession, and was so edified by the amount of the contributions, that he relieved the clergy of all further trouble, by a simple process. He placed himself, suitably attired, at the head of the sledges and the Church, sang his own carols, and pocketed the contributions of the loyal and the faithful, with the ecstasy of a man who has discovered a new sensation combining profit with pleasure.

The men whom Peter sent into foreign countries to study art or science, were all subjected by him, on their return, to strict examination. If he found that they had profited by their studies, their reward was certain; if they had come back almost as ignorant as when they had set out, the penalty was also inevitable. They were degraded, made menial servants, and placed on the list of fools. At the court of the Czarina Anne, there were several of these individuals, over whom the chief fool, Pedrillo, had absolute authority. They were employed in keeping the imperial stoves supplied with wood, or in looking after the hounds, and served as objects of ridicule to the Czarina and her whole court.

Often by Peter's side at table, and in his cups, was to be seen an individual addressed as the "Patriarch of Russia," and sometimes as the "King of Siberia." He was attired in sacerdotal robes, and covered with loosely-hung gold and silver medals, which sounded musically as he moved. It was a favourite trick with Peter, when he and the Patriarch were equally drunk, to suddenly overturn him, chair and all, and exhibit the reverend gentleman with his heels in the air. There is record of a similar fool in the person of the "King of the Samoieds." He

was a Pole who was boarded, and who received a rouble monthly, for entertaining the Czar and court by the exercise of such small wit as was reckoned at such low worth. This title of "King of the Samoieds" was usually conferred by Peter on what may be styled his occasional fools. Thus, meeting among the patients at the "Water Cure," at Alonaitz, in 1719, a Portuguese Jew, whose singularities and comic bearing delighted the Czar, the latter first promoted him to the equivocal distinction of "titular count," and then conferred on him the fool's royalty in the Kingship of the Samoieds. The most burlesque of coronations was subsequently performed in Peter's presence. It was to some such rank that the Czar elevated his own old writing-master, Sotoff; and it may be observed that when the Russian priests remonstrated against his distinguishing his fools by the title of "patriarchs," he changed the rank and addressed them as "priests."

To the rank of court fool Peter also elevated the head cook of the Czarina. The cook's wife had, by her conduct, brought dishonour on her husband, but Peter turned this to comic account. He would have the poor official up at his state dinners, and overwhelm him with coarse jests and gestures in presence of the guests. The cook, however, is said to have occasionally answered so smartly, touching the Czar's own domestic matters, as to make his Majesty wince again. In exchange of gross jokes, it was "like master, like man." Neither time nor place was ever thought of by Peter when his will or comfort was in question; and even at church, in winter, when he felt cold, he would take off the wig of the man nearest him, and clap it on his own head, returning it after the service.

Thus the Czar made fools of various members of his household, and different officers of his court, but he had one official court fool whom he favoured above all others,

and whom he carried abroad with him to foreign courts,—among others to those of England and France. At the latter court the buffoon produced almost as much effect as his master. The period of Peter's sudden arrival in Paris, was that of the boyhood of Louis XV. He had travelled so swiftly from Holland, that his appearance in the French capital was the first intimation received by the authorities there of his having left the "pays de canaux, canards, et canaille," as Voltaire flippantly designated the Dutch territory.

Peter was accompanied by the Princes Kourakin and Dolgorouki, by Baron Schaffirofy, and by his ambassador, Tolstoi. But, distinguished above these was Sotoff, the buffoon. He had originally been employed by Peter to instruct him in the art of writing. In one respect, all the followers of the Czar were on an equality, for there was not one of them who had not, in his turn, suffered exile, imprisonment, or the knout. There was no opportunity, therefore, for any one to reproach his fellows.

How Peter looked, and walked, and talked, and danced, and tossed the little King in his arms, and sneered at the Regent Duke of Orleans, and uttered much nonsense, and drank bottles of beer in his box at the opera; all these matters are chronicled by Saint-Simon and Cardinal Dubois, according to the point of view of the individual chronicler. The Cardinal seems to have been more particularly struck with the buffoon. The court of France no longer possessed official jesters, and Sotoff was a marvel and a novelty to the Cardinal. The latter, or the writer who drew up the autobiographical memoirs, from the notes and papers of Dubois, speaks with evident surprise of the presence and duties of Sotoff, who was not only privileged but commanded to give expression to every form of folly, without being in fear of any application of the knout. What jests he uttered were incomprehensible to Dubois and the French court,

for Sotoff could only speak his native Russian; and in that language he uttered comments on all around him which raised the hilarity of the Muscovites, and excited the surprise, curiosity, and perhaps the vexation of the French courtiers. Sotoff, too, was singular in his appearance. He was at this time an aged dwarf, with long snowy hair flowing over his shoulders. He was so ugly and so deformed, that, according to the Cardinal, the very sight of him was almost insupportable to the refined and handsome nobles and ladies of the French court. Dubois compares the sound of his voice to the harsh croaking of frogs. In spite of all this, his wit and humour were very much to the taste of Peter, who could listen to a comedy of Molière's without once smiling, but who could never hear a remark from Sotoff, the court fool, without growing weak from mere excess of laughter.

Sotoff was a man of low birth, but Russia has been especially remarkable for her fools of high degree, among whom Princes have not only been reckoned, but proud to find themselves upon the motley register. The famous Ice Palace, erected by order of the Czarina Anne, is one of those wonders of which most persons have heard. It was erected for the celebration of the marriage of Prince Galitzin. It is not, however, generally known that the Prince, who was between forty and fifty, and already had a son, a lieutenant in the army, was on the register of pages and court fools. This registration was a punishment inflicted on him for having changed his religion, from orthodox Russo-Greek to Roman Catholic. It was at the Czarina's bidding that the princely fool wedded with a girl of low birth, and it was in obedience to the same high authority that couples from every province in the empire came up to do honour to the nuptial festival. A procession of above three hundred persons started from the imperial palace and traversed the city. The bride and bridegroom were under a canopy, on an elephant; some of

the guests followed on camels, and others rode in sledges (for it was midwinter of 1739), and their sledges were in the shape of animals of various species, and were filled with passengers looking as singular as the conveyances themselves. After the ceremony, a banquet was given in honour of the Duke of Courland, where each couple ate their own peculiar provincial dish; and this was followed by a ball. The ball concluded, the married pair were conducted to the Ice Palace, their temporary home. It stood on the banks of the Neva; and was composed of large blocks of ice cemented into one mass by water. In length it was sixty feet, in breadth eighteen feet, and in height twenty-one feet. In front was an ice portico, with ice columns and statues. Behind these were the single floor, divided into two apartments, all of ice, with the doors and windows painted in imitation of green marble. Two ice dolphins spouted forth naphtha flames to light the procession over the threshold; and two ice mortars and three ice cannon fired several volleys of welcome without breaking. The two apartments were divided by a lobby; they were well furnished with elegant ice tables, ice chairs, ice statues, mirrors, candelabra, glass, plate, in short, every possible article that could be thought of, and all of ice. The bedroom had state bed, sheets, curtains, two night-caps, etc., all of ice. About the exterior were ornamental pyramids, a conservatory, with birds on the trees, a bath-house, and other appendages, of the same cold material. The whole was brilliantly illuminated, and into this Temple of Isis the Prince and his bride were solemnly conducted, and a guard-of-honour placed at the gate prevented any intrusion on the married couple, or any attempt of the latter to escape from the cold hospitality provided for them by the Czarina. This joke was so highly approved of, that to build ice palaces, though not to have performed in them the same play, became an imperial weakness. With regard, however, to court fools, it is a singular

fact that Russia has not only made such officials out of foreign ambassadors whom she has duped by dint of that mingled piety and mendacity which betray the Tartar blood within her; but she has also commissioned her own envoys to play the rude jester at the courts of Kings whom she would fain bring into contempt,—and could bully with safety.

Such an agent as this, Russia found in the representative Repuin, whom she retained at the court of the last King of Poland, Stanislaus Poniatowsky. The arrogance of the Muscovite ambassador was extremely offensive, but his power of joking was quite as frequently employed, when he had a political end in view. One day he bullied or supported the King; at another time he rendered him contemptible by sarcasms uttered against him, in his hearing. Lord Malmesbury, in the first volume of his Diaries and Correspondence, dated from Warsaw, in 1767, gives several instances of unseemly liberties taken by Repuin with the King, such as Scogan himself would have hesitated to take with the royal Edward, who allowed him privilege of speech and action. One sample from the measure piled up by Lord Malmesbury will suffice :—"At the Primate's, it was a question of some of the ancient Polish monarchs who, being driven from their own kingdom, were obliged, by way of support, to exercise some trade,—one particularly who, for awhile, was a goldsmith at Florence. The present King, discoursing on this topic, said, he should be extremely embarrassed, if he was to be put to the trial, as he knew no way of getting his livelihood. 'Pardon me, Sire,' said the Ambassador, 'your Majesty still knows how to dance well.' What should we think," asks Lord Malmesbury, "if we heard an ambassador tell our King, 'If all trades fail, your Majesty may turn dancing-master'?" There is no fear, however, of such a polite observation being made at our court by any Russian joculator in an ambassador's dress. These arrogant agents know how to be submissive;

and, in presence of a monarch to be respected, can sink to the ground, like a cowardly boy who avoids a blow from a bold adversary, or a Russian fleet in presence of a resolute enemy.

The Czar Paul had around him a number of that class of jesters who found favour with Peter; and he was further delighted to be made merry by the comic French actors who visited his capital. It was not always safe for these, however, to jest with him too roughly; as may be seen in the case of Fougère, the actor, who taking the jester's privilege to speak freely to Paul once at supper, and to mock at his vaunted abilities, was punished for it by being dragged from his bed, in the night, tossed into a van which did not admit the light of day, and carried off, as he was politely informed, to his extreme horror, to Siberia. After several weeks had been spent in the journey, Fougère reached his destination, and on his eyes being unbandaged, he found himself in presence of Paul and a joyous number of *convives*, all of whom laughed heartily at the capital jest, whereby Fougère had been made to believe that he was being conveyed to Siberia, when he was only being drawn round and round St. Petersburg, for whole weeks.

Nicholas, who may be said to have swam to his throne in the blood of his subjects in the capital, and to have been washed from it by the same sanguinary deluge at Sebastopol, had, like his father Paul, his frolicsome humours and facetious whims. Of course he did not keep court fools; but he would sometimes catch a fool and compel him to exhibit for the amusement of his court. He once captured an individual of this species in the person of Save Saveitch Yakovloff. The young gentleman with this cacophonous appellation had been an officer in the Guards, and had been commissioned to purchase horses for his regiment. As, however, he had not cheated the vendors, and brought back steeds worth double the money which had been entrusted to him wherewith to

buy them, his condition in his regiment was rendered intolerable, and he was forced out of it by a series of small but wearying nuisances. He applied for permission to travel, but was refused. In disgrace and involuntary idleness, all state employment denied him, Save was puzzled for a time as to what occupation he could turn to. After consideration, he resolved to set up in the capital as the glass of fashion, and he appeared in public in the most exaggerated costumes, founded on French and English books of fashion. He one day presented himself on the Nevski Prospect in the following guise. On his head was a little peaked hat like a flowerpot reversed; his beard was *à la Henri Quatre;* his cravat was a thick scarf tied in a gigantic bow; his cloak was a little *Almaviva;* in one hand he carried a knotted cudgel, with the other he held a small glass to his eye, and between his legs, or at his side, waddled the most ugly and costly of bulldogs. He was thus airing himself when the Imperial carriage passed; Nicholas sat therein; his eye rested for a moment on the "exquisite," and then the Czar beckoned to the "fool," who hurried up, thinking that his fortune was re-established.

A dialogue ensued, which I give on the authority of Michelsen, who may be safely trusted. "Pray," said Nicholas, eyeing him with humorous curiosity, "in the name of all the saints, who are you, and where do you come from?"

"May it please your Majesty, I have the honour to be your Majesty's faithful subject, Save Saveitch Yakovloff."

"Indeed!" replied the Emperor, with much gravity, "we are enchanted to have the opportunity of making your acquaintance, Save Saveitch. Oblige us by just stepping up, and take a seat beside us."

Yakovloff slyly dropped the cudgel, and, not without some misgiving, took his seat.

"But stop," said the Emperor, when they had driven on a little way, "where is your stick, Save Saveitch?"

"Never mind the stick, your Majesty."

"But I do mind it, Save Saveitch Yakovloff." The carriage was turned back, the cudgel picked up, and orders were given to drive on straight to the Winter Palace. When there, the Emperor alighted and made a signal to his alarmed fellow-traveller to follow. "O Save Saveitch," said he sarcastically, "pray do not take off your cloak! we must have you—hat, stick, cloak and all." The Emperor led the way to the apartments of the Empress.

"Pray, my dear," inquired he, "do you know this animal?"

"No," replied the Empress, unable to repress a laugh at the strange figure before her.

"Then allow me to inform you this is our faithful subject Save Saveitch Yakovloff. What do you think of him?" said Nicholas, turning him round, "is not he a pretty fellow?"

The unfortunate Save Saveitch, whose feelings may be imagined, after having afforded the royal couple much diversion, was dismissed, half-dead with terror and confusion; but before he departed, he received a salutary hint that the Czar did not always punish the foolery of his subjects so leniently.—In short, Nicholas, after using poor Save as a court fool, was mean enough to dismiss him without a court fool's wages.

Thus much to illustrate my subject with regard to Russia. There is not much to be added in reference to the other Northern courts. In the autobiography of Christina, Queen of Sweden, which forms part of the ponderous memoirs of that sovereign by Archenholz, she tells the world that when in her youth the Regency of Sweden had determined to provide her with apartments separate from those of the Queen-Mother, the latter opposed it with vehement anger and sorrow, while Christina herself, with all her tender respect for the widow of Gustavus Adolphus, approved of the measure with as vehement delight. "I was afraid," says the lively Queen, "that she would be a grand obstacle in

the way of my studies and exercises, which annoyed me much, for I had an extreme desire to learn." Besides, adds Christina, "the Queen-Mother took delight in maintaining a number of buffoons and dwarfs in her apartments, which were always full of them, after the German fashion. Such a fashion was insupportable to me, for I have a natural aversion against that wretched class of beings."

Flögel traces the Scandinavian jesters back to the period of the Scalds (the Skial, or wise men), who were also called Spekinge (from *speke*, wisdom), from which, he says, is derived our word *speak*, which, however, is not always in connection with wisdom. The Sapphic verses of the Scalds often conveyed a double meaning, and perhaps this species of wit caused the idea of the bards being a species of jesters. That they were magnificently rewarded there is no doubt, seeing that Hiarne, the Scald, wrote an epitaph on Frotho I. of Denmark, which so delighted the people that they elected the poet to the vacant throne. The people must have been poor judges of poetry, for the epitaph is but an indifferent production. And then the story is doubtful, belonging to the period anterior to that of Harald in the ninth century, all the details of which are mythic and contradictory. One fact, nevertheless, connects the Scald with the jester; both were licensed to sing or speak with impunity. The former might make his harp ring to the intoning of the royal faults, just as the fool might raise the laughter of a court by sarcastic allusion to kingly foibles. And, moreover, there were several Scandinavian Kings who were their own Scalds, as we have seen several princes who were their own fools. The parallel may, perhaps, be allowed to pass; the more, that the wit of the Scald was generally as incomprehensible and cumbersome as that of some of the early court jesters. Fancy the verse which literally runs:—"I hang the round hammered yawning serpent at the tongue of the falcon-bridge, by the gallows of the shield of Odin,"

to mean nothing more than, "I put the ring on the finger of the hand, near the arm!" Here was euphonistic folly! And the words, too, were mixed up unconnectedly, having no meaning at all as they originally stood; and through what a circumlocution-office of construing and interpreting had the student to go before he reached the thing signified! The *falcon-bridge* was the hand on which the falconer carried his bird. The *tongue* of the bridge was the little finger; and the *gallows of the shield of Odin*, was the arm on which the warrior's shield was wont to be suspended!

They were mighty fellows, those Scalds, in the days of heathenism, but as Christianity dawned and rose, their power decreased. They became court poets, which, according to Ménage, was the same as court fool, and they sank into ordinary minstrels, who sang, as their historians say, with more truth than refinement, simply to "fill their bellies."

Like the Italian fools, the Scandinavian jesters seem to have been mere practical jokers. Of one, who was not clever enough to transmit his name to posterity, we are told that a King of Denmark once accepted his invitation to repair to an old castle, and there drink ale-soup with him; and that the fool, conducting his Majesty to the sea-side, remarked, "There is the soup; when you have finished that you shall have the ale." At a much later period the fool is to be found in another capacity; thus, at the triumphal entry of Admiral Bagge, there figured in the procession "the court fool Hercules," whose duty it was to play on the fiddle. Nothing however is said of his proficiency.

In Scandinavia, as elsewhere, the fool is sometimes seen in the light of excellent counsellor and acute statesman. This was the case with the jester of Frederick II. of Denmark, about 1580, when that monarch happened to be in much perplexity touching a bargain he had made, or half made, with some English merchants at Copenhagen. He

had been induced to accept their offer to purchase the island of Huen, in the Sound, at the cost of as much English scarlet cloth as would reach all round the island, and a piece of gold for every fold of the cloth. The perplexity of Frederick arose from the fact that he had bethought himself, if the English possessed Huen they might fortify it, and with their fleets blockade the Sound itself. He was sorely puzzled, for he wished to break the bargain without seeming to break his word. He looked in utter helplessness at his fool; and the fool, smiling at the supposed difficulty, came to the King's relief. "You have only to tell the English merchants," said the descendant of Yorick, "that in standing to your contract, it is understood that as soon as they pay the price of the purchase, they must remove the article purchased; for it is not to be imagined that you sell such an unwieldy article, to let it stick at your door, or to let them stick on it in your very jaws." The King was delighted; he wriggled out of his bargain, by the fool's good aid, and the popular voice added the name of the Scarlet Isle to that of Huen, or Venusia.

These brief notices will perhaps suffice to show the quality of the joculator in the Northern Courts. The next chapter will as briefly illustrate the Motley of Spain.

THE SPANISH JESTERS.

In one of the letters addressed by the anxious Chesterfield to his son, the discerning Peer remarks: "There is at all courts a chain which connects the Prince or the Minister with the page of the backstairs or the chambermaid. The King's wife or mistress has an influence over him; a lover has an influence over her; the chambermaid or *valet de chambre* has an influence over both; and so *ad infinitum*. You must therefore," adds the estimable trainer of his child, "not break a link of that chain, by which you hope to climb up to the prince."

With a little modification, such as "fool" for *valet de chambre*, this counsel would not have been without value to any young Spaniard about to push his fortunes at any one of the royal courts once scattered over the length and breadth of now united Spain. At these courts, the jester was paramount in influence. The introduction of the merry official is said to date from the entry of the Troubadours from the south of France. This joyous company brought with them many methods of entertaining royal and noble listeners, but they gradually degenerated, as the minstrels did in other countries, into buffoons,—and probably found the latter the more profitable profession of the two.

James II., King of Majorca, provided for the merry professors in the royal household, by establishing them there, under the protection of the law. "From ancient times," as tradition tells us, so runs the decree, "it has been lawful for Mimes or Jesters to reside in princes' house-

holds; for the execution of their office is a provocative to gladness. Wherefore, we will and ordain, that in our court there shall always be five jesters, of which five, two may be trumpeters, and a third our letter-carrier *(tabellarius)*." This arrangement left the other two in close attendance upon their royal patron.

That these officials were not always addicted to joking, may be seen in the case of the anonymous fool, who is said to have stabbed Theudis, or Theodored, the royal Goth, at the Council of Toledo. It is believed, however, that the assassin only feigned folly in order to obtain freer access to the person of the prince. Generally speaking, the Spanish fools seem to have been as merry fellows as Figaro, whose office of barber was indeed frequently exercised, like that of the jester, with infinite mirth and much impunity. So merry were some of these *Joculatores*, that one king, at least, is said to have died of laughter at a fool's jest. This king must have been very easy to kill, if we may judge by the joke which, as we are told, proved mortal to him.

The monarch in question was Martin of Arragon, who reigned from 1394 to 1410. His favourite jester was the renowned Borra, who drove such a thriving trade by his jokes, that he is said to have been worth a ton of gold. He looked down upon many a poor philosopher, remarking the while, "I have made more by my folly than that fellow by all his wisdom!" His influence with the King was unbounded, and the bribes he received in consequence tended very much to increase his fortune. What he obtained in this way can only be guessed at. That his jokes were rewarded in magnificent style, we may judge from the circumstance which occurred when Borra exerted himself professionally at a banquet at which Sigismund, afterwards Emperor, was present. The latter, pleased with Borra, so loaded him with silver ere he left the room, that the fool could not carry it away without bending. Folly was never more

richly paid, except, perhaps, by Queen Sibylla da Forcia, who paid her joculators in gold, and much pleasanter coin besides.

Borra, as before intimated, killed his royal patron by a joke. King Martin was suffering from indigestion through too greedily devouring an entire goose. As he lay groaning on his bed, Borra skipped into the room with a merry air, and the Monarch inquired of him, whence he came.

"Out of the next vineyard," answered the fool, "where I saw a young deer hanging by his tail from a tree, as if some one had so punished him for stealing figs." When it is added that the King died of laughter at this joke, the historians forget the goose and the indigestion.

Alphonso, King of Arragon, had for *his* fool, one Luis Lopez, who, according to Cervantes, lies buried in no less a place than the cathedral of Cordova. Lopez kept, like other fools, a "Fools' Chronicle," in which he entered the follies of the court, and the names of the offenders. The King had given 10,000 ducats to a Moor to purchase horses with, in Barbary. Some days subsequently, on looking over the Chronicle, he was astonished to find a page containing simply his name.

"Cousin Luis," said his Majesty, "why do you enrol me among fools?"

"For trusting 10,000 ducats to an infidel Moor, without security," answered Luis.

"Tush, man! The Moor is honest, and will bring back either horses or money."

"Then if he does," said Lopez, "I will scratch out your name and put his in its place."

The above joke was used in various forms, till it grew old, and fools of quality would no longer plagiarize it. It is told of at least one jester at every court. Many fools would have been above such a jest at all; for there were some who, though jesters, joked with instruction in view.

Michael Aitzinger was one of these. I do not know that he can be strictly called a Spanish fool, being a Belgian, but he held the office at the court of Philip II. of Spain, though he became better known for various heavy historical essays than for light jests quickly spoken.

In one case we have an instance of a Spanish court fool also belonging to Philip II., exercising the high profession of prophecy. Flögel thus tells the story, which he borrows from Richter's *Spectaculum Mundi*.

"A court fool of Philip's once saw the following persons sitting at the Royal table:—Hugo Boncampius of Bologna, Papal Nuncio in Spain; Perettus, a Franciscan monk of Ancona, who in his youth had been a swineherd; and the Protonotary Sfondrati, of Milan. 'Dost thou know,' said the jester to the King, 'that you have three Popes at table?' Thereupon, he touched each upon the shoulder according to the future order of their succession; first, Hugo, afterwards Gregory XIII.; then Perretus, subsequently Sixtus V.; and lastly Sfondrati, who became Gregory XIV."

Flögel considers this as a rather fabulous story, although he admits that the Eastern idea of the sayings of fools being sometimes inspired by divinity, prevailed occasionally in Europe. He cites Claudius Agrippa as ascribing the gift of prophecy to Klaus Narr, of whom I have already spoken; and he maintains the alleged fact that Klaus, at the royal table, aroused the guests by exclaiming that one of the Elector's castles, twelve leagues off, was in flames. According to tradition, this proved to be the case, and if so, Klaus may claim the possession of that not very desirable gift in this world,—the gift of second-sight.

Of the Spanish jesters in noblemen's households there is not much to be said. Perico de Ayala, the paid buffoon of the Marquis of Villena, was among the most celebrated. The Marquis, says Floresta (*Española*), "once ordered his

wardrobe-keeper to give the fool *un sayo de brocado;* the man only gave him the *mangas* and *faldamentos.* Away went Perico to the court brotherhood, and requested them to bury one who had died at the Marquis's, and then away went the funeral procession, with the little death-bell tinkling before them. The Marquis, seeing them at his door, asked them why they came. 'For the body,' said the fool, 'as the Chamberlain only gave me the trimmings.'"

Perico distinguished himself more wittily in his reply to a knight who once asked him the properties of turquoise. "Why," said the fool, "if you have a turquoise about you, and should fall from the top of a tower and be dashed to pieces, the stone would not break!"

I have already spoken of the Spanish jester who was in the household of the Marquis del Guasto. The latter, a vaunting General, was opposed to the Count François de Bourbon, at the battle of Cerizoles. He had previously made himself so sure of defeating the Count that he took his fool with him, attired in a splendid suit of armour, that the jester might witness his triumph. He had, moreover, promised the jester several hundred ducats if he succeeded in bein gfirst to carry to the wife of the Marquis, the news of her husband's victory. Things, however, fell out just contrary to the Marquis's expectations. Instead of defeating the Count, the Count defeated him, slaying thousands, capturing cannon, and taking 4,000 prisoners,—not half the number of the slain. Among the prisoners was a noble-looking gentleman in a gorgeous suit of armour, of which he appeared to have taken very peculiar care, for there was no sign of battle about it. It seemed, however, to promise heavy ransom, and the dignified-looking warrior who wore it was conducted with much courteous ceremony to the tent of François de Bourbon. When the Count inquired of his captive as to the rank he bore, the merry fellow at once burst into a laugh, and con-

fessed that he was only house fool to the Marquis del Guasto. "And where is the Marquis?" asked the Count. "Oh!" replied Sir Fool, with a merrier laugh than before, "he has ridden home to his wife, to cheat me of my reward by carrying her the earliest news of the battle."

If we may judge from the little that is to be collected in books, concerning the Spanish jesters, they were mentally superior to their Italian colleagues. Some of the former achieved a literary reputation. At the head of these was Estevanillo Gonzales, who held office successively in the households of Count Piccolomini and the Duke of Amalfi; both these noblemen were commanders in the King of Spain's army, in the Netherlands. In 1646, when Gonzales was with the Duke, he wrote his autobiography, describing himself as "hombre de buen humor." This book was partly translated, partly rewritten by Lesage, and is doubtless known to most of my readers.

The wonder perhaps is, that dignified Spaniards should keep jesters at all. But one of the gravest of Englishmen did so rather than be out of the fashion. I allude to Sir Thomas Wentworth (Strafford), who on his establishment at Wentworth Woodhouse, about the year 1620, maintained a retinue of sixty persons, and among them there is enumerated, by Hunter, in his History of Doncaster, our ancient friend, "Tom Foole." The mode was then more prevalent in Germany than in any other part of Europe; and thither, if the "gentle reader" object not, we will now betake ourselves.

THE FOOLS OF THE IMPERIAL AND MINOR COURTS OF GERMANY.

VOLTAIRE remarks, in his 'Age de Louis XIV.,' that the fashion of keeping court and household fools and dwarfs, was for a time the *grande mode* of all the courts of Europe. It was a remnant of barbarism, he tells us, which continued longer in Germany than elsewhere. He, naturally enough, traces this mode, in its origin, to a lack of amusement of a better sort. The poor pleasure which degraded the human intellect, was only a pleasure, he says, because, in the times of ignorance and bad taste, really agreeable and praiseworthy pastimes were not easily procurable. The unphilosophical philosopher, however, forgets that the most celebrated fools were at the most refined courts; and that L'Angeli was in full swelling triumph long after Corneille had composed 'The Cid.'

The "mode" in Germany dates undoubtedly from a very early time, if we may credit a German poetical tradition which tells us that the jester used to appear in the procession of the condemned to execution. But this incident is perhaps only the poetical filling-up of an imaginary picture.

The profession of "Fool" was so profitable in Germany, in the Middle Ages, that not only were men found ambitious to be attached to some nobleman's house, where there were ordinarily ten or a dozen of them, but they were proud of being as it were the honorary fools of the nobles, and for this reason. Holding the rank in question, they roamed over the country, reaped considerable profits by the exercise of

their profession, and if their licentiousness brought them into contact with the magistrates, they pleaded their privileges as fools to noblemen whom they named, and whose warrant they exhibited. The abuse of this ran to such excess, and the extravagance of fools became so offensive, that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the abuse and extravagance were circumscribed by various decrees; and towards the end of the last-named century, the titular or itinerant fools were suppressed altogether.*

The official fools, at the Imperial courts of Germany, were, for a long period, held in very great esteem, especially when they united in their own persons the professions of court fool and court poet. Charlemagne divided among his mimes, fools, and poets, the entire countship of Provence; and hence is said to have been the cause that wit and poesy flourished so generally in that pleasant district.

On the other hand, there were exceptional cases, as at the wedding festivities of the Emperor Henry III. at Ingleheim in 1043. The fools joked, the mimes played, the minstrels harped and sang, but the Imperial bridegroom gave them nothing. They all left the castle thirsty and penniless, and young Henry cared little for their maledictions, for he was a man of strong mind, stout heart, and good taste, and had more respect for Contractus, the chronicler, and Adalbert, the biographer, and Willeram, the translator, than for all the fools and chanters in the world.

The German laws had full as little regard for these officials, albeit princes, generally, patronized them. The Saxon law, especially, laid down that their property, at their death, belonged to the Government, which was a certain method of keeping them reckless and extravagant with what they earned when living.

They were occasionally even greater knaves than fools, an instance of which we have in the case of the jester of

* Dr. Binder, 'Allgemeine Realencyclopädie,' vol. v.

Frederick Barbarossa, who, for a bribe from the Milaners, undertook to rid them of his master, by flinging him out of window, and who nearly succeeded in the attempt. The Emperor's cries attracted his Guard, two or three of whom seizing the stalwart fool, tossed him headlong out of the window, by which he met swift and sudden death upon the stones below.

In some cases, considerable prizes in money and dress were given to the fools who eminently distinguished themselves. Thus, in 1342, Casimir the Great, of Poland, having two jesters at his court, one of whom was a German, offered a prize of twenty florins and an entire new suit of clothes for the one who should excel the other in foolery. The two carried on their struggle in presence of a court whose laughter shook the very roof. The fools were so equally matched that it was difficult to determine which was the more skilful in his frolicsome craft. They jumped, skipped, fought, talked, sang, and illustrious warriors and fair ladies held their sides, the better to retain their breath. At length, the jesters took to some very nasty jokes, at which the august company only laughed the louder. Still the competitors were so even in their skill that the noble arbitrators could not judge between them, for the victory was to be obtained by one of the fools doing some crowning feat which the other should strive in vain to accomplish. This was at last effected by the German, but for what he did, I must refer the curious to the *Noctuæ Speculum* of Argidius Periander.

If the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg kept no fool of his own, the reason was that his nose, which was of a size to make Slawkembergius swear with admiration, was the source of so many jokes, that it provided his court with fun enough, and so saved the expense of a fool. Rudolph was yet Count of Hapsburg, when, in 1264, his secret enemy Count Ulrich, of Ratisbon, resolved to attack him and the Zurich forces, of which Rudolph was General, unexpectedly.

"I think," said Ulric, one day, to a circle of his friends, "we have men enough to properly punch Von Hapsburg's great nose;"—"*seine grosse Nase zu klopfen.*" Ulric's fool heard the remark, and struck with astonishment, or wishing to convey intelligence to Rudolph, he repaired to the quarters of the latter to satisfy his curiosity, or any other feeling by which he was influenced for the moment. His cap and bells procured him ready access to Rudolph's presence; and in that presence he stood for awhile, fixedly staring on the august proboscis. At length he said, "Well, it is not a mile long, after all. I can't imagine why my master should want a whole army in order to punch such a nose. I could myself smash it flat with a blow of my fist." "Thanks, good fool, more for your hint touching your master, than that of the power of your fist." Therewith Rudolph protected the jester, and took the initiative in attacking the Count of Ratisbon; whom, after continued assaults, he reduced to such a condition, that Ulrich was grateful for permission to become a simple citizen of Zurich.

Throughout life the nose of Rudolph was ever provocative of remark. He was once with his courtiers in a very narrow defile, when they encountered a peasant. "Pass on! pass on!" cried the officers; "the Emperor! the Emperor!" "That 's all very well," said the clown, "but where can I go? his nose fills up the whole valley." The courtiers conjectured that the Imperial wrath would be excited; but Rudolph, turning his head on one side, exclaimed laughingly, "Now, friend, get on with thee; my poor nose is no longer in your way."

Few of the Emperors appear to have extended greater favour towards the jesters than Maximilian I. And yet he found as much peril as profit in his intercourse with them. In one case he had nearly lost his life while loading a fowling-piece, by the act of a house fool, who, coming into his presence with a candle, was about to place the light on an

open cask of powder. On another occasion he was playing with his fool at snowballs, when the jester sent one at his right eye with such violence, that the Imperial sight was weakened for a month.

I have said "his fool," but I should have been more correct in saying "one of his fools;" for his jester, *par excellence*, his own very familiar friend and fool, was indisputably Konrad (or Kunz) von den Rosen, the Don Japhet d'Arménie of Scarron, and the "De Bossu" of Werner.

Konrad of the Roses was as fearless in applying a joke, as he was neat in the construction of the joke itself. When Maximilian (then Archduke of Austria and Burgundy) had once defeated Louis XI., a portion of the cavalry of the former had not shared in the victory, having early in the day betaken themselves to flight, following their leader, Count Philip von Ravenstein. Kunz was on the field, and followed the Count's example. On other occasions he did better and more soldierly service; but for what he rendered now, he was sarcastically bantered at a court festival at which he and the Count were present. "All very good," said Konrad, "but remember, if I showed speed, Count Philip was even more nimble than I, and was a long league ahead of me when I turned my back on the fray. Ah, Count," he added, turning to that "rapid rider," "you had a valuable steed that day! he flew out of danger as a bird flies in the air; and when my horse was blown, and I was compelled to draw rein, yours was still charging away with his wrong end towards the enemy."

There was so much useful knowledge, common sense, and actual bravery about *him* of the Roses, that some authors, like Manlius, refuse to rank him among official fools. "The Soldier and Wit of Maximilian," is a term applied to him, and we have an instance of his good sense, when he counselled his Imperial master, at a certain disturbed period, in 1488, not to enter Bruges, as he would certainly be seized by the

citizens, and be laid up hard and fast in the castle. Maximilian refused to follow the advice, and entered the city, only to meet the fate foretold him. The fool, wiser in his generation, rode boldly in at his master's side, through one gate; and quietly out, quite alone, through another. He was a faithful fool, however, and returned secretly, after awhile, in order to rescue his "dear Max." On one dark night, he swam the moat, hoping to be able to convey a rope to the illustrious captive; but he had no sooner glided into the water than he was attacked furiously by some old swans, who did not relish the intrusion. He with great difficulty escaped drowning, and got back to shore. He subsequently repeated the attempt to liberate his master, and the means he adopted will remind the reader of an incident in 'Ivanhoe.' No persuasion could induce Maximilian to avail himself of the opportunity offered him by Konrad. It was not that the Prince was at all influenced by a reluctance to leave the jester to be hanged,—for the latter, after gaining access to his master, in a priest's dress, was to stay behind, and run the chance of being hanged, while Maximilian went off in the sacerdotal guise. But Maximilian suspected that the term of his imprisonment was nearly at an end, by more legitimate means. Konrad rated his patron with affectionate sharpness, but in vain; the jester was obliged to pass out through the groups of guards in waiting, looking as much like a priest, and feeling more like a fool, than when he entered.*

* The above is related on the authority of Flögel, who follows Fugger. The Flemish Chroniclers give an entirely opposite version, as far as regards Maximilian, declaring that he repeatedly attempted to escape. In the third volume of the Chronicles, page 74, the Flemish writer says:—"Soo dat Maximiliaen, op verscheyde tyden, sig selven begonde te verkleeden in verscheyde verworpe kleedern, nu als eene vrouw, dan als een godsgewyde, weederom als een heerenknecht, om behendelyk zyne langdurige gevangenis te ontloopen; maer alles was te vergeefs. Hy was te well bekent, ende syne bewaerders hadden grooter sorge als

As a common mountebank at court entertainments, we have one sample of the quality of Kunz, at the marriage at Augsburg, in 1518, of the Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg with the Bavarian Princess Susanna. At the festivities which followed the match, Kunz was seated on the edge of a reservoir, with a preaching monk, and two or three others, witnessing a foot-race, got up to gratify the more illustrious personages. At the shout which rose on the race being won, the jester fell backwards into the reservoir, as if by accident, dragging with him the monk, whom he managed to duck soundly, and who in his turn pulled in several others by his struggling. The excellence of this joke was that not only was the monk nearly drowned, but that Konrad, on emerging from the water, accused him of being the original cause of the mischief, whereupon the poor preacher was nearly pummelled dry by the indignant yet laughing bystanders, and to the great satisfaction of "persons of quality."

It is very clear, I think, that the inspiration of a fool was not always trusted to, and that a joke was sometimes suggested to him, by his master, when the latter had a particular purpose in so doing. I find a trace of this suggestion in the case of a costly joke which the jester of the Roses would certainly not have dared to make on his own responsibility. A deputation from the Venetian States had presented to the Emperor a magnificent goblet of the purest crystal. At the banquet, given in honour of the Ambassadors and their Government, Konrad was in high, loud, and active mirth. So active indeed that he contrived to hook his spur in the tablecloth, and dancing off, to pull away

hy meynde." Literally,—"So that Maximilian, at different times, began to disguise himself in different cast-off suits,—now as a woman, then as a fool, again as a nobleman's follower, that at last he might escape from his tedious captivity; but all was in vain. He was too well known, and his guards had greater care of him than he thought for."

with him everything on the table, the crystal goblet included, which lay in fragments on the ground. The Ambassadors were indignant, and they cried loudly for a flagellation for the fool. Maximilian, however, refused to gratify them. "You see, worthy sirs," he remarked, "that the thing was only of glass, and that glass is very fragile. Had it been of gold, it would not have broken; and even if it had, its fragments would at least have been valuable." The Kaiser the more felt this, as he was sorely in want of gold;—of which Konrad told him he would have enough and to spare, if instead of being Sovereign he would take the office of a Minister.

The freedom with which the fool treated his great patron is seen in the incident at the card-table, at which Kunz was playing, the monarch standing by him the while. The game, at which much money was staked, was won by *him*, who under certain circumstances held, and could play, four kings. Kunz had only three, but after playing his third, he suddenly seized upon Maximilian, and crying, "Here is my fourth and winning king," swept the whole of the stakes into the pockets of his white trunk-hose, slashed with scarlet. Then throwing his light-blue cap upon his head, and buckling to his girdle the sword, outside whose sheath he carried knife and fork, and pulling together his blue and yellow vest, and fingering complacently his ample and well-curled beard, he walked off laughingly, every tiny bell in his bonnet ringing merrily to his laughter, as he passed along.

If all Konrad's jokes had been as harmless, albeit as bold as this, there would have been little wherewith to reproach him. But some of his jests will not bear repeating, and others are only remarkable for their silliness. Some were quiet and telling; as when a too grossly flattering genealogist curried favour with the Emperor, by showing him a pedigree which traced his descent from Noah.—"Bravo!"

exclaimed Von den Rosen, who was present, "then the Kaiser and I are cousins, through the patriarch. I did not know I was of half such good blood!" Maximilian smiled approvingly on the fool, and then contemptuously on Master Johann Stabius, poet and genealogist, who had thought to get crowns from a King, and only obtained sly reproaches from a fool.

Finally, it may be said that the hand of Konrad was as heavy as his tongue was sharp. One scene in the life of this jester, exhibits him in a melodramatic light, that reminds one of the days, or nights, of "Raymond and Agnes, or the Bleeding Nun." Konrad was once compelled to pass the night at a sorry inn, in a wood, through whose intricacies he had lost his way. It was kept by brigands; but the joyousness of Konrad won him the heart of the waiting-maid, who bade him beware of the male-servant who would come to take away his supper-tray, and who would extinguish the light, as if by accident, in order that the poor traveller might be murdered in the dark, by the landlord and his fellows. Konrad, by good luck, had with him a dark-lantern; this he lighted and concealed beneath his coat; and when the incident occurred for which the maid had told him to be prepared, the jester went to work in terrible earnest. As soon as the candle had been extinguished, he turned on his lantern, and saw himself in presence of three ruffians with very menacing looks and stilettoes. Kunz's own poniard was quicker than theirs: having buried it in the bosom of the bandit nearest to him, he addressed himself to the landlord, of whose companions one lay dead at his feet, and the other had suddenly fled. The traveller did not kill his host, but bound him tightly, with the ready aid of the female servant, who was herself a sort of prisoner, and delivered him to that justice which begins with much needless form, but which has a rope and a noose at the end of it.

It was soon after this exploit that Konrad von den Rosen lost his Imperial master, Maximilian. The poor fool loved his patron; "I followed him near for a long while," said he, "and I will follow him closely now." And so it was! Konrad followed Maximilian, when Germany, too busy to think of him, was talking of Charles V., Luther, and the Diet of Worms.

The last-named Emperor, however, was himself no illiberal patron of official fools and dwarfs. Both figured, like living caricatures, amid the splendours of his Imperial court. One of the latter, who seems to have been both dwarf and buffoon, a Pole grandiosely named Corneille de Lithuanie, is spoken of as having figured with such distinction at a tournament held in Brussels on the first Sunday in February 1545, as to have carried off the second prize. The first was gained by the Count d'Egmont, for having broken the greatest number of lances; but on Corneille was conferred the second, for having been the next best in the ranks, and for general gallantry.

Charles had native fools in his other dominions. In Spain, we meet with that excellent jester, Don Francis; also with Pedro de San Erbas and Zapata. There was another in the service of Charles, named Pape Theun, who had originally exercised some office of trust. Of these, Francis was the wittiest; but it is said that the sharpness of his wit brought about his assassination. He was certainly mortally wounded by assassins, but his wit kept by him to the last. He was assailed at his own door, and his wife, hearing the consequent disturbance, cried out from within to know what was the matter. "Nothing at all, mistress," exclaimed the fool, "they have merely killed your husband." Another fool, Perico de Ayala, who was a retainer in the house of the Marquis de Vilena, attended on Don Francis while he was dying, and piously asked him to pray for poor Perico in the next world. "I will, I will," said Francis; "but,

Perico, suppose you tie a string round my little finger, lest I forget it."

This specimen of wit does not say much for the official fool; and it is still worse in the case of Pedro de San Erbas, the only incident connected with whose office, with which I am acquainted, reveals rather the wit of his master than his own. Thus we are told, that after the abdication of Charles, he held a court at Valladolid, to receive the farewell compliments of the nobles and ladies of the vicinity. When the ceremony had concluded, Pedro approached to take leave of his old patron. At seeing him, Charles took off his hat, and Pedro thereupon asked if the act was one of courtesy, or simply to indicate that he was no longer Emperor. "Neither, Pedro," answered the prince; "I do it to signify that all I can give you now is this simple token of civility."

Of Zapata nothing is known save his remark when Charles, who owed his entire household a year's salary, once observed to his courtiers, after teasing the fool for a long time, "He will soon pay me back again." "Ah!" exclaimed Zapata, "what can I pay back, when not a soul under your roof has received a doit of their salary for a twelvemonth?" This remark showed the bold freedom rather than the wittiness of Zapata's tongue. As for Pape Theun, he seems to have been rather a practical than a loquacious joker. He was insolent rather than witty of speech, and when this insolence brought him into disgrace, the jokes he played to recover the goodwill of his master were coarse jokes, acceptable to coarse people in coarse times, but the repeating of which would assuredly not be acceptable to my readers.

To return to the fools who exclusively belonged to the Imperial court of Germany, the next remarkable individual of the class is Nelle, attached to the household of Matthias II. Nelle not only attended the celebrated meeting of the States, assembled at Ratisbon in 1613, but he presented to

the Emperor a volume, exquisitely bound, which contained, as he said, the record of all that had been accomplished by the statesmen. Matthias opened the book, and found it all blank paper. "Why, there is nothing written here," said the monarch. "Exactly so," answered the fool, "because there was nothing done *there;* and so my record is truthful." I cannot say, however, that this was so witty as the reply of the Speaker of the Commons to Elizabeth, when the latter, at the end of a session, asked him what they had passed; "An it please your Majesty," said Mr. Speaker, "we have passed two months and a half!"

Another story is told of Nelle. In his moody master's reign Lutherans and Papists were at open strife; and a Bishop Clesel, in Vienna, was excessively indignant that the sheep of his own particular pasture flocked every Sunday out of the capital, to listen to a Lutheran monk in the neighbouring village of Hörnals. In great wrath, and open court, he besought the Emperor to prohibit the people from leaving Vienna on the Sabbath for the village in question. Matthias replied that he did not know how this was to be effected; and looking at the fool, he added, "Nelle, can your wit help us in this matter?" "It is the easiest thing in the world," rejoined Nell; "you have only to send the Bishop to Hörnals, and bring the Lutheran monk to preach in the capital, and you will not find a soul desirous of leaving Vienna on the Sunday."

The Emperors certainly allowed a license to their jesters which no one else dared to take advantage of. Thus, at the court of Ferdinand II., we hear of a silly courtier who endeavoured to amuse the illustrious circle by his imbecilities. Jonas, Ferdinand's favourite fool, began answering him according to his folly. But this so offended the noble simpleton of half a hundred quarters, that he exclaimed, "Fellow, be silent; I never stoop to talk with a fool!" "Well, I do," replied Jonas, bending over the courtier's seat as he stood

behind the pompous gentleman's chair, "and therefore be good enough to listen to me in your turn."

This courtier did not resemble Charles VI., at whose court the greatest favour was enjoyed, not indeed by a professional wearer of cap and bells, but by a saucy wit of the name of Steffens. The latter had been a clerk, and his readiness of repartee had so endeared him to the monarch, that he elevated him to the rank of Count, and so entirely surrendered himself to the jesting Count's company, that none of the ministers, not even Prince Eugene himself, could obtain an audience, without being previously kept waiting an hour. I have read however more of Steffens' reputation for wit than examples of the wit itself. Möser cites an instance which seems to me to have more impertinence in it than true humour. For example, in 1724, Count von Mikosch died of poison. "What is popularly said of Mikosch's death?" asked Charles of Steffens. "Well," answered the latter, "I will tell you, if you will make me a present." The Emperor put some gold pieces in the hand of this mercenary fellow, who rejoined: "The people say that it was the devil who carried off Mikosch; and they add, that if he had lived longer, and you had continued to trust him and follow his counsel, the devil would speedily have come for your Majesty also." It will be seen by this, that whatever humour there may have been under the ancient fool's cap, there was not much of it to be found beneath the coronet of this lackered Count Steffens.

The smaller courts of Germany, as a matter of course, followed the fashion set by the Emperors. At Anspach the Margraves were ordinarily their own fools; but towards the end of the last century the little court found intense delight in the religious folly, if I may so speak, of a poor exartist named Bayer. He was reasonable and witty on every subject except prophecy and the Apocalypse; and it was precisely from his madness on these points that the Mar-

grave and his courtiers drew most delight, till indeed they nearly drove the poor fellow mad on every other subject as well.

Baden, too, had its fools of various degrees; and indeed the Margrave Philip kept two, Lips and Hänsel von Gingen. The wit or fun of the latter seems to have consisted in his pride, which would never permit him to sit at meat with other jesters who accompanied their lords to the court at Baden. Lips was so great a favourite that he sat in the council-chamber when Philip was presiding. Lips was once asked his opinion on a vexed question which the counsellors could not solve—the admission of the Jews into Baden. "Oh, let them in, let them in," said Lips, "and then we shall have all religions among us, even a little Christianity!"

The jester had occasionally to endure a very superabundant measure of hardship, as for example, when policy or revenge brought about the murder of Duke Ludwig of Bavaria, on the bridge over the Danube at Kehlheim, in 1231. The great but hidden perpetrators of the deed thought it convenient to lay the crime upon the Duke's fool, Stich. He was told that his ducal master having exasperated him by sundry bad jokes, Stich had suddenly stabbed the Duke with his bread-knife. "Ah!" said the poor fellow, as he stood at the gallows, "that some one ought to be hanged for murdering the Duke, I can very well comprehend; but that that some one should be *me*, I do not comprehend at all."

To another of Louis of Bavaria's fools, the King of Bohemia once gave a goblet of such strong wine that the tipsy jester declared he could be content to be a fool through eternity, if he might only always be permitted to drink such wine. But this is far inferior to the quiet observation of the Connaught man, after a long pull at a whisky flask; that, had his mother first brought him up on such beverage, he would never have been weaned. And the Bavarian is not less inferior in his

wit to another Hibernian, who, on hearing a senseless drunken man pronounced dead, coolly remarked, "Dead is he? I wish I had half his disease."

It must be confessed, however, that it is difficult to place fairly the German fools or joy-makers before a foreign public. Many of their brightest sayings turn on the point of some sparkling pun which, when rendered into English, is, as the Germans themselves would say, for a translation, completely "overset." On the other hand, the feats of some of these joy-makers are incredible, although related in solemn Latin by grave bishops, like Dubravius, the diocesan of Olmütz. This prelate speaks at great length, in his 'History of Bohemia,' of a certain Zytho, who was brought to the Bohemian court by the Emperor Wenceslaus, in 1389. In that century, and in that which preceded as well as that which followed it, the court at Prague took most delight, not in witty jesters, but in astounding conjurors, jugglers, magicians, and sorcerers. Individuals of this quality were retained in the sovereign's household, and their achievements were of a nature to do credit to the professions which they exercised. It was when a body of these were exhibiting in presence of Wenceslaus, then on a visit at Prague, that the Emperor produced his own wonderful man, Zytho, ordering him to excel, if he could, those rivals in his vocation. Zytho (so we are seriously told by the episcopal historian) went quietly up to the most accomplished of the wonder-workers, and—swallowed him! The Duke of Bavaria was angry at thus being deprived of his principal performer; and Zytho, at the command of Wenceslaus, reproduced him after a fashion that stirred to thundering laughter that unrefined assembly. The Bishop further tells us that Zytho could change his shape at will; produce any animal required, out of any material, and, in short, work marvels in which the prelate believes, and I do not. On one occasion, at a court banquet, he changed the hands of various of the guests into

hoofs, in order to prevent their taking up the costly viands provided; and on another occasion, seeing a courtier put his head out of window, Zytho made spring from his forehead such a gigantic pair of antlers that the poor gentleman could not draw his head in again, whereby, says the right reverend historian, he produced such laughter as was *never heard* in Bohemia,—the which I can very well believe. I will repeat one other tale recounted of him, as it gave rise to a proverb which I have myself heard applied in Bohemia. Zytho, procuring some wisps of straw, transformed them into swine, which he sold at a good price to a baker named Michael. Zytho simply recommended the purchaser not to take the swine down to the water, which of course Michael did on the first opportunity, out of curiosity, to see the consequence. And he saw it: the swine no sooner touched the water than they were all again transformed into wisps of straw, and went floating away down the stream. Away too went Michael in search of Zytho, whom he found fast asleep on a bench, but at whose leg he pulled so lustily, in order to arouse him, that the leg, thigh and all, came away, and the enraged Zytho summoned him before a magistrate, who awarded him very competent damages. Hence the proverb, applied by a Bohemian to any one who has played him false or put a trick upon him, "You'll get as much profit from that, as Michael did from the swine."

Such were the stories rather than the deeds which gave delight to the Ducal court of Bohemia a few centuries ago. According to tradition, Zytho was ultimately carried off by his arch-patron, the devil; not however so much because of his sorcery and satanic deeds, as because he fell into the heresy of John Huss, who, according to the Roman Catholics of that day, and the *Univers* of this, was himself an agent of Lucifer.

My readers may remember that a pagan Roman Emperor left to a decision of the Senate the question whether Christianity should or should not be tolerated in the Roman domi-

nions. In Iceland, too, the same question was submitted to a similar process, and in both cases it was carried in the affirmative, by narrow majorities. In Bohemia, one similar, but less important in degree, was left to be decided by the issue of a contest between two court fools. In 1461, the Hungarian King, Mathias Corvinus, and the Bohemian King, George Podiebrad, met in conference at Prague. The latter, a Reformer, was the father-in-law of Corvinus, a Roman Catholic, and each had a capacious hut erected, in which, by turns, the august parties, illustriously attended, carried on a course of debates, disputes, hard words, and jollification. From the Pope's Nuncio down to the two court fools of their majesties, all took active part in every circumstance of the conference. One of the knotty points under discussion was that of religion,—the Reformed or the Roman Catholic.

"Let the two fools fight, and decide it by single combat," said the Bohemian counsellor, Isdengo, who was secretly in the pay of Corvinus. "Let the two fools settle it!" cried the counsellor. The Papal Nuncio had the decency to protest against the proposition. But the two sovereigns, lacking excitement, and weary with last night's banquet, thought the idea excellent. The fools were accordingly commanded to fall-to and do their best in behalf of their respective forms of faith. After exasperating each other by sallies of irritating wit, they grappled and commenced wrestling. The spectators stood anxiously looking on while, by such singular argument, the question of the Sacrament in one or both kinds was being discussed. The Bohemian Utraquists were in high spirits, for their champion was a gigantic fellow, while his opponent, the little Hungarian, was not stouter built than ordinary strong men. He maintained the contest, however, manfully, and when the course of combat passed from wrestling to hard blows, he dealt one so well placed, that it would have upset the Utraquist

champion, had he not been promptly upheld by a Bohemian in the rear.

Thereupon the whole Hungarian faction roared out, "Shame! Unfair!" etc. The Bohemians shouted loudly in an opposite sense. From exclamations, both parties fell to their swords, and the whole company were speedily hacking at each other, while the fools sat down and laughed at both sides. Their respective royal masters had great difficulty in appeasing the tumult and postponing the debate. Meanwhile, many a good fellow had got a hole in his side or his throat, from which his life-blood went trickling; and, finally, Isdengo was banished for making the proposition, by which he had left a Sacramental question to the arbitrement of a couple of jesters.

The fool still meddled with religious matters, and Killian, the jester of King Ladislaus of Hungary, once lectured the Bohemian sovereign George von Podiebrad, as the Hussite monarch stood by the side of the Roman Catholic Ladislaus, at a mass in the cathedral at Breslau. "I see," whispered Killian to George, "with what sort of a face you look at our service; but I cannot see your heart. So tell me, do you not think our religion better than your own? See the nobles, princes, kings, who follow it. Had you not better join with them than with your Bohemian Reformers? Can a few men like these be of more sound understanding than the whole Christian Church? Let noble knight as you are join with noble knight, and not with the dirty mob of Reformers."

"Friend Killian," said George, "if you say this unprompted by others, you are not such a fool as you pretend to be; but if you have been moved to it by others, tell them from me, that I act according to my conscience, am responsible to God only for my belief, and that my trust is in Him alone. What I profess, I firmly believe; and were I to change, I should be not only fool, but knave; and I see no

cause, cousin Killian, why I should either make myself like unto you or unto those who moved you to this bold step of yours. Keep to your folly, Fool, and I will keep to my belief."

It is certain that, as late as the sixteenth century, the court or house fool was still a serf or thrall, and could be bought and sold. We have a well-known instance of this, which may be mentioned here. When Louis II. of Hungary (Louis I. of Bohemia) visited Erlau, in 1520, he found that the governor there possessed one of the best trained hawks and one of the merriest fools that Louis had ever seen; and so well pleased was he with them, that he offered to purchase both. We can only approximately judge of the value of the fool, as the price given for him and the bird is set down in the sum total. There was a good deal of haggling, but the money paid down by the King was 40,000 gulden —between three and four thousand pounds.

Looking in at another minor court, we discover that "Frederick with the bitten cheek," a Thuringian prince, was partly indebted to a court fool for the scar from which he got his name. It happened that his father, Albert, Landgrave of Thuringia, loved a lady, Cunegunda, better than he did his wife, Margaret, daughter of the Emperor Frederick II. The court fool seems to have been a menial, since I find him described as a carrier of wood and water to the Wartburg, where Margaret resided. Cunegunda so wrought upon the fool by terror, that he consented to murder the Landgrave's wife; but he only entered her room to reveal to her the conspiracy, and to ask forgiveness. Poor Margaret, aware that her life was not safe, since her rival, Cunegunda von Eisenberg, had resolved to take it, resolved on immediate flight; and it was in her eagerly kissing her little son Frederick before she escaped, that she bit his cheek, and left for ever thereon the testimony of her terror and affection.

"She, wanting wit, and frantic with affright,
Would fain have kiss'd, but, mad with grief, did bite."

The name of the faithful fool is not given; but he is said to have lived in her service, during the few months she survived, at Frankfort-on-the-Maine.

The most renowned fool of the following century was Jenni von Stocken, who was attached to the household of Leopold the Pious. He was greatly esteemed by his master, and often gave him counsel which would have profited him had he been more ready to follow it. Jenni strongly advised Leopold against entering the Swiss defiles before securing his return therefrom, in case of accident. The issue of the battle of Sempach, A.D. 1386, showed that a fool's advice would have been worth taking.

Nearly all von Stocken's sayings and doings are attributed to various jesters of succeeding centuries. This, too, was the case with Killian, the fool of Albert of Austria. But there is one saying which is undoubtedly Killian's own. He was a strangely eccentric fellow, and some one asked him why, being so profoundly wise a personage, he should play the fool. "Ah! there it is," said Killian; "The more thoroughly I play the fool, the wiser do men account me; and there is my son, who thinks himself wise, and whom everybody knows to be a fool."

It may perhaps be safely asserted, that of all the court jesters at the lesser courts of Germany, Klaus von Ranstadt, or Klaus *Narr*, "the fool," was the most famous. He flourished at the electoral court of Saxony at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. He served as fool to four successive Electors. The first of these, the Elector Ernest, met with Klaus when he was keeping geese. The Prince was passing through Ranstadt with a great number of horses, men, and waggons, when Klaus, wishing to see the sight, and unwilling to leave his geese, tied all the young ones by the neck to his girdle, and with two old geese

under his arms, he stood to view the procession. The Prince laughed, questioned the goosekeeper, who had strangled his young charge, and was so delighted at the sharp replies he received, that he engaged him at once as his fool, to the great delight of the grave elders of the place, who declared that Klaus kept the whole district in a continual uproar of idle laughter by his tricks and waggery.

His tricks and his waggery, however, have frequently a coarse and sometimes an unintelligible character. They have been published at various times, and one sample will serve to show how Klaus performed his office.

The Elector Frederick, finding his dominions threatened with invasion, was inclined to treat with the enemy, but first asked the fool what he thought of the matter. "Give me your best mantle," said Klaus, "and I will tell you." This having been done, Klaus withdrew, tore the mantle in two, and reappeared with one of the halves hanging from his shoulders. The Elector, enraged at the damage done to his best cloak, asked what was meant by such a joke. "It means," said Klaus, "that if you treat with the foe, you will soon look as ridiculous with half your dominions, as I do with half a cloak."

This was a more cumbersome sort of wit than was exercised by a contemporary fool, Peter Bärenhaut, at the court of Philip, Landgrave of Baden. The latter complained of headache on the morrow of a terrible drinking-bout, and the fool said he knew a cure for it. "What is your remedy?" asked the Landgrave, "Drink again today," answered Peter. "Then I shall only suffer more tomorrow," said the Prince. "Then," rejoined Peter, "you must drink still more." "But in what would such a remedy end?" asked the Landgrave. "Why," said Peter, "in your being a bigger fool than I am!"

The jesters to small potentates rivalled the *Narrs* of the Imperial Court in their boldness. It would seem that at

grave ecclesiastical discussions, where a common man would not dare to make a remark, nor a courtier to venture on a comment, the fool spoke and acted without restraint. Eck has left an account of the great controversy on Articles of Faith which he held against Luther at Leipsic in 1519. "The citadel," he says, "was prepared as our battle-field; the place was guarded by seventy-six soldiers, to protect us, in case of need, from the insults of the people of Wittemberg." Against the wit or anger, however, of the fool of George, Duke of Saxony, who was present with his master, no precaution was thought necessary. To the jester, some of the courtiers whispered that Luther and Eck were disputing about his marriage, the former being for and the latter against it. The ducal fool had but one eye, but that was fired with indignation against the supposed opponent of his marriage. Eck bore his angry looks for a time with some patience. At length, annoyed at and not comprehending them, the grave churchman took to mimicking the infirmity of the fool, by screwing up one eye closely, and rolling the other at him in a sort of comical defiance. This drove the Saxon joker out of all bounds of moderation. He started up, pummelled old Eck with hard words, called him rogue, liar, and thief, and after overwhelming him with a torrent of similar amenities, took an indignant hop, skip, and jump out of the hall, amid the universal laughter of the delighted audience.

At a later period, Augustus II., of Saxony, had his own official fool in the person of Joseph Frohlich, for whom he had ninety-nine different suits made, and who in his full dress was often seen in the streets of Dresden. He was not the only fool at this court, for we learn that when the Prussian "joker" von Gundling died, the court fools of Dresden went into mourning for their colleague, wearing crape bands twenty ells in length, and mourning cloaks so long that they or others were always tumbling over them.

A singular instance of what was considered to qualify a man for being a court fool, presents itself in the case of Conrad Pocher, jester to Philip the Upright, Elector Palatine. Pocher was a cowherd, and was once sent a-field, with a boy to attend him. The boy was sick and feeble, and Pocher, out of compassion, hung him to the branch of a tree. He was tried for the murder, but he defended himself with such humour, on the ground that he had greatly benefited the helpless little cow-boy, that the court was in ecstasy, and the Elector, recognizing Pocher's merits, immediately appointed him to the post of official jester. Little is said of his wit. His jokes were of a very lumbering nature. He would crop the tails of the Elector's cows, that they might look like the Elector's horses; and once, when his master laid siege to a small town, which he wanted to reduce by famine, and accordingly occupied the passes leading to it, Pocher lay for three days across a ditch which ran in the direction of the town, in order to hasten, as he said, the surrender of the place!

Another Palatine Prince, Duke Wolfgang of Neuberg, had a far wittier fool in "Squire Peter," as he was jokingly called. It was once remarked to the Squire, that the Duke did not so much care for him as the Elector of Cologne did for *his* fool. "I know that very well," said Peter; "the reason is, that my master looks after his country and subjects, and therefore has not the leisure to play with fools, as *your* master has."

Of his dignity, Peter had a very exalted idea, and when a young Count once wished to bandy jokes with him, the Squire haughtily observed, "I am his Serene Highness's jester, and not the fool of every sorry Count that comes to visit him!" He spared the clergy as little as the nobility; and to a priest who once asked him if he had prepared for the coming fast, Peter replied, "Better than you, Father, for you have bought fish and eggs enough to last a family fond

of good living, for a month. Now *I* have bought nothing at all; and *so* am better prepared for fasting." At the close of the fast, the same priest inquired how he had kept it. "I did away with a couple of hams," said Peter;—at which the reverend gentleman looked shocked. "Don't look so disgusted," rejoined the Squire. "I did away with them in this sense,—I gave them, instead of money, to a neighbour who was a creditor of mine." "You are a merry fellow," said the priest; "let me now hear you say the Lord's Prayer." "I don't know it," answered the Squire. "It is wicked, it is shameful—" the priest began to remark, when Peter interrupted him by observing, "Exactly; that's just the reason why I did not learn it."

Numerous are the stories of this nature told of Squire Peter, who appears to have been something of a profane wit. Towards the end of the century in which he lived, we find a celebrated fool in Pomerania, Claus Hintze, in the service of Duke John Frederick of Stettin. Claus was originally only a cowherd, but after his appointment as official jester to the Duke, he so grew in his patron's favour, that his master made him lord of the village of Butterdorf; and in consequence of a rhymed petition to that effect, declared that the district should never again serve as a wolf-chase. For this privilege the grateful people thanked a fool who had a fair share of fun in him, who served his ducal master well on very critical occasions, and who was as jolly a toper as any in Pomerania.

In the last character he was surpassed by a successor at the ducal court, Hans Miesko, A.D. 1600. Hans was imbecile, and it is surprising to find that, even in the age in which he lived, princes could derive pleasure from the mistakes and unclean acts of such persons, or could give them official standing in their household. Miesko died in extreme old-age, from reaching which his gluttony and excessive drinking had presented no obstruction; and he is

perhaps the only fool who had the honour of a funeral sermon being preached over him. This was done by the command, and in the presence of, his master, Duke Francis, and the Reverend Philip Cradelius, who took his text from 1 Samuel xxi. 13–15: "And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?" The preacher too much exalted the merits of Miesko, as Christian, servant, and fool; over-praised the condescension of princes towards such individuals, and founded on his text, scriptural warrant for the existence of such officials. But I think there is something satirical in the application of the text, which teaches us, says the preacher, that where great princes are, there too may you look to find great fools. The double meaning should have raised the Rector to a Deanery.—But perhaps Duke Francis did not relish the joke.

While Miesko was making Pomeranian princes glad by his imbecility and the fun drawn out of it, Frederick Taubman was keeping the Saxon court in merry humour by his conceits. But Taubman, though as lowly born as Miesko, was a scholar, and was not officially a fool. He was something of a poet, something of a philosopher, was well-read, was a collegiate professor; but therewith he was poor, yet was fond of luxurious living, and therefore he was glad to take his eccentricities to court, where their exhibition was paid for in ducats, rich viands, costly wines, and endless jollification. He was the court fool in all but being officially appointed; and, with better qualifications than many, used the license common to all. On one occasion, a courtier who was shaking hands with him, remarked, "Taubman, your

coarse hands are only fit for digging." Taubman squeezed the courtier's fingers, and answered, "I am already handling a clod." He once asked Cardinal Clesel, if he knew where God was *not*. "In hell," answered the Cardinal readily.—"Nor in Rome," rejoined the wit; "or wherefore is his Vicegerent there?"

Taubman died in 1613. The professional fools increased after his death. The Elector John George I. maintained, in the year 1639, no less than three at the same time. Two of them were named Michael, and one Caspar; and from a tailor's bill quoted by Flögel, it is very clear that, gay as the official dress may have been, it was often patched and turned, before a new one was given in its place.

But, as in the case of Taubman, so in this later period were poor and witty scholars welcome at the German courts. Bolla was one of these; he was an Italian, who had his home in the palace at Heidelberg, where he proved himself to be, what was commonly said of him, *virum ad risum natum*, a man born for laughter. He excelled in macaronic poetry, and not only accepted the name of fool, but begged for fool's largess in very indifferent Latin verse,—of which here is a sample:—

"Amate semper vestrum zanum,
Sed aperite, vestro more, manum.
Hoc precatur vester zanus,
Corpore, non crumena sanus."

It was not only the poor scholar that now was even more welcome for his wit than the official jester. As in Saxony, so in Poland, the liveliest sayings were uttered by non-professional individuals. At the courts in both places just named, the acknowledged court wit, for a long period, was Frederick, Baron of Kyau, who excelled, we are told, both as a general and as a joker. In the same list must be enrolled the Baron von Gundling, who commenced his career

of eccentricity at the court of Frederick William I. of Prussia, at the commencement of the last century.

Von Gundling was a scholar and of good family, and he was chosen by the King as a companion for his few leisure hours, which he desired to turn to instruction and amusement combined. But the Baron was a pedantic fool, inflated with the most absurd pride, and addicted to hard drinking and filthiness, like any Silenus. The King loaded him with ridiculous titles, and he walked about in a dress that must have made him look like our burlesque King Arthur, in 'Tom Thumb,' or Justice Midas, in O'Hara's operetta. It must have been pitiable to see a man of learning submit to any indignity at the hands of King and nobles. He would embrace a dressed-up monkey presented by a prince, as his son; and he took as a mark of favour, his being sent-for to the palace in a sedan-chair, the bottom of which, as previously contrived, fell out by the way, and the bearers of which had orders to push on and keep their passenger walking. He was seldom absent from the private evening parties of the King, where six or eight persons only were present; where beer and pipes were the refreshments which stood before each guest,—no servant being admitted; and where sometimes very serious business was transacted. Gundling died in 1731; his body may be said to have been pelted by epigrammatic epitaphs, but as it was carried to the grave in a wine-cask, long before prepared for the occasion, the clergy refused to bury it with any but maimed rites.

As pedantic and degraded a fool as Von Gundling, and at the same court, was a certain diminutive Doctor Bartholdi, whose buffoonery the King once rewarded by presenting him with a peruke which reached to his feet. But Bartholdi was for ever quarrelling with his patron or with the government, and he ended his days in prison. Nor were these the only persons who played the fool, without professing it, at the Prussian court. Among the latter, and they

were all more or less scholars, was Kornemann, who had not wit enough to escape marrying a sham countess. A second was Von Hackmann, who was rogue as well as scholar and buffoon, and robbed the King who sheltered him at court. He fled to Vienna, changed and re-changed his religion, returned to Prussia, was whipped by the hangman, and died in misery. David Fassmann, a writer of considerable merit, was another of those buffoon-philosophers whom Frederick William distinguished as his "Learned Fools." Fassmann held various offices at court, where his sufferings were as great as his absurd dignities, in both of which the monarch found opportunity for laughter. For losing a key entrusted to him by Frederick, Fassmann was condemned to carry a heavy wooden one, an ell long, round his neck for several days. On various occasions, these learned fools were excited against each other by noble persons, who found mirth in so doing. Then would they fly at each other; and Flögel describes one with a pair of tongs thrusting a burning coal in the face of his pedantic adversary, who, flying at his assailant, turns him on his face, strips down his dress, and beats him with the tongs, till he is tired, or, varying his attack, sets fire to the antagonistic pedant's peruke by firing a pistol among the curls.

The Baron von Poelnitz, at the court of the last-named King and at that of Frederick II., fulfilled a similar office, without being expressly named to it. In the intercourse which subsisted between the King and the Baron, it is difficult to say which was the greater fool, and it is inconceivable that reasonable creatures should be guilty of the absurd follies attributed to them. The most of the jokes were childish enough, and King and Baron quarrelled and became reconciled like children. As a specimen of the familiarity which existed between them, here is one in connection with a royal commission to the Baron to procure a pair of turkeys. Poelnitz sent the birds with a very laconic letter: "Here are the

turkeys, Sire." Frederick, rather nettled at the style, ordered the leanest ox that could be found to be decked ridiculously with flowers, and the horns to be gilded. This done, the animal was taken and tied up in front of the Baron's house, carrying this inscription on the forehead:—"Here is the ox, Poelnitz."

The Baron's readiness at repartee is exemplified by a remark he made to a Baron Schwertz, who was of Jewish descent. Poelnitz, one wintry day, standing with his back to one of the royal stoves, set his long-tailed coat on fire. "Ah," said Schwertz,

"Ainsi brûla jadis et Sodome et Gomorre."

To which Poelnitz readily replied,

"Quoi, du Vieux Testament tu te souviens encore!"

Solomon Morgenstern is the last of the learned fools whom I shall mention. He, too, submitted to every indignity, that he might keep in favour by exciting the good-humour of the King. His dress was more caricatured than that of any of his fellows; and instead of a sword, he wore a fox's brush at his side, and in his cocked hat, hare's feet for feathers. The wisest thing that Morgenstern did, was his lecture on 'Reasonable thoughts on Folly and Fools,' in which there was much sly satire, which was probably lost on the monarch, who presided over the assembly of listeners.

Finally, the last of the privileged fools existed within the lifetime of some aged persons still surviving. He was seen by Dr. Edward Moore, in 1774, at the Electoral court at Mannheim. He was a Tyrolese who spoke German with so droll an accent that universal laughter was excited by it. He appeared when the Elector and his guests sat down to dinner; and he went round the table directing his sallies of wit against every one present, not even sparing the princesses. This was the *ultimus ex officio stultorum;* but the time then was at hand that was to bring with it that revo-

lution which came in contact with nothing in Europe that it did not destroy,—the French Revolution. It touched the German Empire; and down went Empire, Electors, and Fools. The three indeed have reappeared, but under different names and modified forms.

Before closing the roll of German fools, I will notice one who was in the service of Prince Maurice of Orange. He was with the Prince with his forces before Nimeguen. Maurice having some trouble to set his own troops in order, turned to his fool, who accompanied him on the expedition, and asked him whether it would not have been better that he, the jester, should command the army, and the prince turn fool. "Things would not be much improved by that," said the Dutch motley; "for you are as little able to make a jest, as I am to command an army. If we change places, the States General will dismiss both of us." Here, however, the fool did Maurice injustice, for the Prince could say some excellent things; and his description of the martial qualities of the chief military nations of the period, is exactly in the spirit of a professional wit, more true than refined: "The German," said Maurice, "is, in war, just like a louse, which lets itself be killed without flinching. The Frenchman is like a flea, which skips here and there, and does not willingly allow himself to be taken. The Spaniard resembles the insect which can only with difficulty be dislodged from where it burrows itself; and as for the Italian, he is like the bug, which, being killed, leaves an ill smell behind him." —And now for the official fools of Italy.

THE JESTERS OF ITALY.

THERE are very few of the writers who have devoted their attention to the subject treated in this imperfect volume, who have ever alluded to the fool who suddenly appeared at the court of Alboin, King of the Lombards, (A.D. 572,) and who created a large measure of astonishment there, by his rude exterior and his ready wit. All Verona was, in popular phrase, "full of him." The chronicle of his "Astuzie" was long the delight of the whole of Italy.

His name was Bertoldo. He was hideously ugly, and not very clean in his person; dwarfed, and deformed. His eyebrows resembled pigs' bristles; but his eyes beneath them, gleamed like two torches; his hair was as red as carrots, and if you can fancy humanity caricatured to the very utmost extent, you will not, even then, be able to see with your mind's eye the never-matched hideousness of this rustic, who set all the court in a roar by entering the great hall where Alboin was presiding, and, without even uncovering, seating himself by the side of the grim husband of Rosamunda.

The Lombard King smiled sourly at his impudence, and inquired what he was, when he was born, and in what country.

"I am a man," said the monster; "was born the night my mother bore me; and" (this is something of Ancient Pistol's phrase, which, indeed, often smacked of the fool's humour or philosophy,) "the world is my native country." King and court understood, now, with whom they had to do, and they tried his wit by plying him with ques-

tions. "What is the swiftest thing on earth?" asked one. "Thought," was the reply of Bertoldo. To other questions he replied, that the best wine was the wine drunk in another man's house; and that the worst fire at home was to be found in an angry wife and an impudent servant.

"Bertoldo," said the King, "could you contrive to bring me water in a sieve without spilling any?"

"Certainly," answered the fool; "in a hard frost, I could bring you any quantity."

"For so clever a rejoinder, you shall have from me any boon you desire."

"La, you there!" cried Bertoldo, "I shall have nothing of the sort. You cannot give me what you do not possess. I am in eager search of happiness, of which you have not a grain; and how could you give me any?"

Alboin alluded to his kingly power and glory, which the fool mocked mightily. He pointed to the glittering crowds of nobles who stood around his throne. "Oh yes," was the comment of Bertoldo, "they stand round your throne; so do hungry ants round a crab-apple, and with the same purpose,—to devour it." And therewith he so satirized the condition of a King, that Alboin threatened to have him whipped out of court. Some rather sorry jests followed; but as they were rewarded with unaccountable peals of laughter, the Lombard lords and ladies may be supposed to have been more merry, or much wiser, than *we* are. The riotous fun was checked for awhile, by the entrance of two women in search of the King and his royal justice. The subject in dispute was a crystal mirror, which was claimed by both, but which had been stolen by one from the other. Alboin, being a most religious as well as gracious King, was, of course, reminded of the Judgment of Solomon, and thought he could not do better than imitate it. He first ordered the mirror to be broken into powder, and divided equally between the rival claimants; and then he commanded

it to be delivered whole to the woman who had expressed regret that so splendid a mirror should be destroyed. The entire court was in ecstasy at this rather second-hand wisdom of the King, who, with more conceit than might have been expected in such a stern personage, looked at Bertoldo and asked something tantamount to whether he was not a second Daniel come to judgment?

"Your excellent mightiness," observed the fool, "can only be said to be an ass." Nevertheless, the King seems to have had the best of it, for Bertoldo simply confined himself to abusing ladies generally, and the two who were lately plaintiff and defendant, in particular,—as impostors, whose wickedness was past imagining. Thereupon the gallant monarch burst forth into a passionate panegyric on the entire female sex, dealing in warm terms and honeyed phrases, like those in a grand *scena*, by some enamoured *tenore robusto*, and which, set to music by a fashionable *maestro*, and trilled by the darling of the season, would make the fortune of Mr. Chappell, were he only lucky enough to secure the copyright.

"If I don't make you change your tune before tomorrow night's sleep," said Bertoldo, "gibbet me as high as Haman."

"Be it so!" cried Alboin; "by the bones of the Wise Kings, I will keep thee to thy bargain, Sir Wisdom. Look to it."

Bertoldo flung himself on some straw in the royal stable: he was resolved not to go to sleep till he had provided for his triumph; and in five minutes a chuckle of satisfaction was suddenly succeeded by the loudest snore that had ever startled the affrighted ears of the steeds of Alboin the King.

His plan was simple enough; he merely went, in the morning, to the lady who had been so self-denying in the affair of the mirror, and announced to her that the King had issued a decree by which every man was permitted to have seven wives. The announcement had the effect of infuriat-

ing the lady, and she lost no time in stirring up, not only the women of her own district, but half the city. These repaired, swift of foot and loud of tongue, to the palace, swept through its halls, and rushed into the sacred presence of Alboin himself, who stood before his throne with his hand on his sword, as if in presence of an insurrection. Bertoldo stood in one corner of the vast apartment, with a demure and satisfied look, feeling sure of the result.

If the words with which Alboin was pelted by the ladies on this occasion be correctly given by the old chronicle, it is clear that freedom of speech was very fearlessly exercised by the remonstrants,—or rather, by the revilers. It was in vain that the King held his hand aloft, and essayed to speak. He was overwhelmed by a hurricane of screams, squalls, screeches, and reproaches, for issuing the decree in question. One loose-tongued termagant exclaimed above her sisters, that there would have been some sense in him, if he had conferred on every woman the right of taking seven husbands; but to allow every man to have seven wives!!—" and the very idea of such an outrage so worked upon the amiable furies, that they interrupted the loud speaker by a howl so shrill, so intense, so exasperating, that Alboin, after stopping his ears with his gauntleted hands, gave a signal which his guards obeyed by charging the body of remonstrants, and driving them into the streets,—with much attendant ruffling of collars and disturbing of stomachers. When the hall was cleared, there remaind Bertoldo, looking still demurely at the King, and with an inquiring aspect about his expression. Alboin seemed annoyed for a moment; but at length, smiling, he acknowledged that the fool was right, and that women were tigresses.

The revolt of the women, and the share that Bertoldo had had therein, coming to the knowledge of Alboin's not very gentle Queen, she sent for the jester, who, throughout the interview, kept up with her Majesty, as was indeed his

custom in most of the conversations in which he took part, a constant fire of proverbs. As he contrived to surpass the royal lady in this species of "capping," she rather unfairly ordered him, under escort, to carry a letter to certain officials, which letter enjoined them to whip the bearer. At Bertoldo's urgent request, the Queen condescended to add a postscript, whereby the scourgers were directed to spare the head, but by no means to be merciful in an opposite direction. When prisoner and escort reached the gaol, Bertoldo stepped forward, letter in hand, announced himself as head of the company, and bade the hangman's lackeys to lay lustily on his tail, or followers. The poor wretches were lashed till they were raw; and at this practical joke the court laughed, and all that was asked of Bertoldo was, that he should maintain a tournament of words with Alboin's own official court fool.

This fool's name, or nickname, was Fagotto. He was short, fat, and bald; and he was the challenger of Bertoldo. When the King acceded to his request, and ordered the duel of the two fools to take place, he remarked to Fagotto, "Now, proceed; but take heed not to resemble Benevento, who went out to shear, and came home shorn."

Fagotto replied with a pompous boast, and then turning on his rival, assailed him with a species of amenities like those that used to pass between carnival fools on the Paris Boulevards, and before which every decent person fled. From this contest Bertoldo issued triumphant; but the King again taxed his wit by ordering him to demonstrate in what way, as he had asserted, the daylight was whiter than milk, and stimulated him to success by promising him the bastinado if he failed.

Bertoldo is said to have proved his assertion by a simple process. Having access everywhere, he entered the King's bedchamber at night, and closing all the blinds, placed a pail of milk in the middle of the room. Alboin rising in the

dark, overthrew the pail, and then calling lustily for daylight, Bertoldo let the same in upon him, with the remark, that if the milk had been clearer than daylight, he would have seen the former without the aid of the latter. Whereupon Alboin rubbed his shins, shook his head, and supposed his philosophy was wrong.

Bertoldo subsequently had to prove that the royal political system was quite as rickety as the royal philosophy. It seems that the ladies of the capital had united in demanding "their rights." They insisted on the equality of women and men; and demanded therefore that in all matters of government they should be employed in the same way as their lords had hitherto been, exclusively. Alboin had a soft heart, and was inclined to yield to the request; but Bertoldo offered to show the incapacity of the petitioners to fill the offices to which they aspired, by a trick of his own devising, and according to his own office. He enclosed a bird in a casket, and delivering the same to a deputation of ladies, in the name of the Queen, he informed them that their petition was granted, and that the first official duty confided to them was the guardianship of this casket. The ladies carried it off, full of delight and promises of fidelity. But they had no sooner reached the house of one of them, than, after a very little hesitation, in a fit of intense curiosity, they lifted the lid of the casket, and away flew the treasure.

Their remorse was great—not that they had betrayed their trust, but that not one had observed what sort of bird it was; and that consequently their fault was irreparable. In a body, and with the Queen at their head, they presented themselves before the King, imploring pardon. As before stated, Alboin had a gentle heart where ladies were in the case; and he granted an unreserved pardon,—much to the disgust of the ungallant Bertoldo, who declared that such a King was not worth rendering homage to, and that, for his part, he would never bow to him again. Alboin, remembering the threat,

assembled his court early on the following morning, and ordering the upper part of the open doorway to be covered with boards, so that any one entering must necessarily bow to the King, seated opposite, sent for Bertoldo. When the fool arrived, he saw how it was intended to press a stooping homage out of him; but his ready wit amply served him, and swinging suddenly round, he entered the royal presence by "one turn astern!"

The other stories related of Bertoldo, almost do outrage to Romance, as they assuredly do to Reason. Of the more credible, and yet sufficiently silly, jokes, there is not one that is not told of other jesters, and much of both belongs probably to the History of Fiction.

Next to Bertoldo, and far better known to light historians generally, stands joyous and unlucky Gonella, the favourite yet ill-treated jester of Borso, Duke of Ferrara, to whose service he was transferred from that of Nicholas, Count of Este, the father of Borso, who died in 1441.

Borso was a coarse fellow, who savoured coarse jokes; and Gonella, despite his own more refined taste, was obliged to supply his patron with that he best liked. Hence the proverb, addressed to one who is too roughly playing the fool, "We are not now in the days of Duke Borso."

Generally speaking, the Italian fools were more practical in their jokes than witty of speech; yet it is not thus we should expect to find them; but it pleased the patrons of fools as well as if it had been divinest wit, admirably spoken. For instance, Borso the Duke had a sick Duchess, and he ordered the then newly-married Gonella to send his wife, that she might amuse the illustrious lady. "She's as deaf as a stone," said Gonella,—which was a jester's lie, told for a purpose,—"and you must roar like a tempest, to make her hear." The Duke would have her nevertheless, and Gonella, hastening to obey, said to his wife, on despatching her to the palace, "Now, wench, there will be ducats for us if

you mind my bidding. The Duke is as deaf as a lump of clay. If you would have him hear, you must shout with a voice that would arouse the Seven Sleepers. Away with you, and do not be afraid to pitch it high." The consequences may be imagined. When the jester's wife met the Duke at the bed-side of the sick Duchess, there ensued a dialogue that might have been heard by the guard at the outer gate. Each shouted till the head of the invalid throbbed again; and she begged her husband to speak lower. "It's of no use," said Borso, "the woman's as deaf as a post." "Not at all," answered the wife of Gonella, "it is you who are deaf, if my husband has spoken truth." Whereupon it was discovered that Gonella had played a trick of his profession; and as no better could be had for the moment, the jest was declared to be excellent. So easily pleased were the illustrious nobles of that day, who depended for a laugh upon practical jokes like the above—if, indeed, the joke be Gonella's; for a similar story is told of other jesters and their patrons. Perhaps the same may be said of the following, which has certainly been appropriated by various authors.

"For the love of the saints, give a poor blind man alms!"

"Pray pity the poor blind; and Heaven preserve your precious eyesight!"

"Born blind, gracious signor; bestow your charity on one who never saw light!"

Thus prayed three blind beggars, as Gonella passed by them to Mass. "Poor fellows!" said the jester, "there is a florin, divide it amongst you." He gave nothing at all; and as those who stood near smiled, he put his finger on his lips, to enjoin silence.

"May Heaven reward you in Paradise!" said the blind men, in chorus;—and a moment after, "Let us share the signor's charity." But as neither had any florin, and as no

one believed that he was not being robbed by his fellows, they fell to savage words, and from savage words to blows, fiercely striking at each other with their crutches till heads were broken and bleeding; and Gonella passed in to prayers, with the complacent comment, "Blessed are the peace-makers!"

Whether it was some such comment or some still worse joke that once angered the Duchess, I cannot say, but he had so offended her that she sent for him to her chamber, where she had stationed half-a-dozen of her maids, armed with sticks, and with orders to lay on the fool without mercy, as soon as he should appear. Gonella however saw, as soon as the door was opened, what was intended, and he cried out, "Ladies, my back is quite at your service; all the favour I ask is, that the one I kissed last will strike first, and that the most impudent hussey among you will lay on the heaviest." Taken by surprise, each hesitated to strike; and Gonella tripped away to the echo of the Duchess's laughter.

That he well deserved the bastinado, is certain, if all be true that is told of his tricks to swindle honest shopkeepers out of goods and money. They were such tricks as no common shop-lifter would now stoop to, nor tradesmen be deceived by; but they earned the unprincipled fool many a scourging, and they seem to have been held derogatory to his profession, for there is record of a Florentine jester, named Mocceca, remonstrating with Gonella on the disgrace brought upon their common vocation by his flagrant want of honesty. "If honesty be the most profitable policy," said Gonella, "by all means let us adopt it."

That his place was profitable, is pretty clear, from the fact of his betting a hundred crowns with his master, the Duke, that there were more doctors in Ferrara than there were members of any other profession. "Fool," said Borso, "there are not half-a-dozen to be found in the city Direc-

tory." "I will bring you a more correct list in three or four days," said Gonella; and then the jester went, with his jaws bound up, and sat at the church door, and as every one asked him what he ailed, he answered, "The tooth-ache;" whereupon each questioner prescribed an infallible remedy, and passed on, Gonella writing down his name and address, instead of the prescription. At length he appeared, still with his jaws bound up, at the table of his master, who, hearing from what he suffered, declared that there was no remedy but extraction. Immediately, the fool put the Duke's illustrious name on the list of Ferrara doctors, and reckoning them up, counted just three hundred. The great man laughed aloud, and told down his forfeited crowns with as much glee as if the joke had been worth paying for. It was at all events a more harmless jest than that which Gonella subsequently played, in return for a practical joke at the hands of the Duke. The latter, finding Gonella's pony in the ducal stable, cut off its tail, and, as a comical revenge, the jester took the Duke's mule, and cut off its upper lip. The princely owner was moved to anger, it is said; but when the two animals were paraded before him, their mutilated condition so touched the humane prince, that he took Gonella round the neck, and laughed till he was breathless.

That neck itself was soon to suffer; and there seems like retribution in the fact. Borso lay ill, and his medical advisers pronounced his case hopeless, because they were too ignorant to cure him. His malady was a raging fever. Nature at first helped him a little, and the prince was enabled to repair to a country residence, where his fever settled into a fierce quartan; but he was not prevented from taking exercise. The whole ducal court was in sorrow because of the condition of their rough but not ungenerous master, and no one grieved more than Gonella. The latter heard that the doctors had asserted that nothing but a sudden fright would shake the malady out of the body of the

prince. But then, who would dare to suddenly frighten such a terrible potentate as Borso of Ferrara? No one but the poor fool; and he did it effectually. While walking in the garden with his moody master, trying in vain to make him smile, the two came up to a deep lake, where the Duke usually took boat, and as he was about stepping in, Gonella, without a moment's hesitation, pushed the Duke into the water. Borso roared aloud for succour, screamed in his agony, and cursed the fool, who ultimately, with aid he had prepared, drew him out. Borso was carried to bed, where he fell into such a perspiration from his fright and exertion, that he got rid of his fever, and rose free from any disagreeable symptom except his wrath against the jester. The latter was condemned to exile, with a sentence of death in case of his being found upon the soil of Ferrara. Gonella went into banishment, which he bore with so much impatience, that after a few months he resolved to return,—without incurring the threatened consequences. He thus contrived it: filling a cart with the earth of the Paduan district in which he had been sojourning, he rode boldly into Ferrara, where, upon being captured, he pertinaciously maintained, as he sat in the cart, that he was still upon the soil of Padua. Roquelaure, the French court wit, is, erroneously, said to have copied this trick, and with better result than was encountered by Gonella. The Duke ordered him to be seized and to be beheaded. "I will only pay fright with fright," said Borso; "so, when his neck is on the block, let fall upon it, not the axe, but a drop of water; then bid my fool arise. I shall be glad to congratulate him on his and. my recovery." All was done as the Duke directed. Gonella, made sad for the first time in his life, was solemnly conveyed to the scaffold. All the usual ceremonies of the lugubrious drama were then enacted, and these over, the poor jester, with a shake and a sigh, laid down the old insignia of his office, and, blindfolded, placed his head upon the block. The exe-

cutioner stepped up, and, from a phial, let fall a single drop of water on the fool's neck. Then arose a burst of laughter and a clapping of hands, and shouts to Gonèlla to get up and thank the Duke for the life given him. The fool did not move, and all around laughed the more at the jest which they thought he was perpetuating. Still he remained motionless; at last the headsman went up to him, and raising Gonella from the ground, discovered that he was dead. The drop of water had had all the effect of the sharpest axe; and the spectators went home repeating to one another, "A shocking bad joke, indeed!"

Such was the end of Gonella, a man proud of his family name. It is a name not unknown to our own times, and it is borne by an individual of higher dignity than the Florentine fool. Monseigneur de Gonella is the Papal Nuncio at Brussels, and there is now wisdom in the family, as well as wit.

Again, a practical joke had once wellnigh killed Menicucci, the jester to the Grand Duke Ferdinand I., in Florence. Ferdinand loved to surround himself with men who could in any way administer to his enjoyment, and Menicucci, who dubbed himself Count, took up the office of parasite and fool, that he might be in continual intercourse with the aristocracy. One of his follies was in the conviction he entertained, that there was not a corner of the globe in which his name and fame were not known; and that Kings and Emperors were dying of envy to make his acquaintance. In the Grand Duke's household he never permitted any official to take precedence of him; and, as indicative of his superiority, he once mounted to the top of a high closet in the great stone hall of the palace, where he insisted that the pages should serve him at dinner. They humoured him for awhile; but while the mock Count was finishing his repast, they carried off the ladder by which he had mounted, filled the hall with damp straw, to which they set fire, and would

have left the screaming fool to be suffocated, but for the Archduke, who, hearing his cries, went to his assistance, and after enjoying the joke for awhile, ordered the choking "Count" to be released.

Ferdinand had a fool of quite another quality in the person of Ciajesius, who was a melancholy and serious fool, addicted to gloomy prophesying and solemn admonishings, rather than to quips and jests, like his fellow-professors. As he was well acquainted with Latin, the Grand Duke appointed him to the office of tutor to his young sons, that they might learn the language from him colloquially. When he laid down his more respectable vocation, he asked permission to proceed to Padua, to take the degree of Doctor of Laws. Ferdinand refused, on the ground that the dignity would be lowered by its being conferred, by favour or otherwise, on a court fool. But Ciajesius contrived to escape to "learned Padua," where he submitted to examination, and returned to Florence triumphantly with his diploma. Ferdinand roughly reproached the authorities of the University, for making a doctor of his fool, and thereby a fool of the Grand Duke. They replied that the profession of the candidate was entirely unknown to them; and that they did not remember any one having passed more creditably through his examination.

Ferdinand would have preferred a fool to a philosopher, like Gian Andrea Doria of Genoa, who once being ill, and condemned to take some very disagreeable remedies, and to adopt a very unpalatable diet, summoned his jester Feo to his room, and ordered him to take the same remedies and follow the same course of diet as his ducal master. "Why, master," said Feo, "you are like the condemned in the infernal regions, who want everybody to suffer just what they do themselves. I beg to be excused." "No, no, merry friend," said the Doge, "you ate and drank of the best with me when I was well, and you shall even share the same fare

that I have, being ill." And accordingly Feo was obliged to swallow many a detestable potion; and the mighty but nervous Doge could find delight in the torture and embarrassments to which he exposed his fool.

There is more matter for astonishment in the subject in which great men could find amusement. Vincentius, Duke of Mantua, when he received Frederick, Duke of Wirtemberg, at his castle, in the year 1600, could think of nothing better wherewith to amuse his princely guest, after a day's hard hunting, than to make sport with his jester. On the latter, armed with sword and stick, and placed within improvised lists, was let loose a young wild boar, deprived of his tusks and upper teeth, but still a dangerous adversary to encounter. The illustrious spectators roared with delight at seeing first the fool, then the boar, down. Now the jester was uppermost, now his savage enemy was on the top of him; anon they were rolling over and over; and it was impossible to say which had the best of it. The boar, all deprived as he was of his chief weapons, would probably have overcome the fool; but the latter was carried off with bloody cockscomb, for which sorry plaister was provided in the laughter, applause, and pistoles awarded him by his refined patrons.

The Wirtembergian Duke had a fool of his own, named Jeronimo, a Spaniard, who was not so careful of his pistoles as Feo. He was an inveterate gambler, and at one sitting lost 4000 crowns, a sufficient proof that his profession was not always an unprofitable one. The rage for play was so strong upon him, that he once agreed, in case of his being a loser, that his adversary should take aim at him with a crossbow, and discharge a certain number of little pointed darts at his head. He came off a little injured, but he was used to rough treatment, and when the weather was too inclement for hunting, his master would turn him into his courtyard, and there he formed an object of chase and

assault for august princes and lofty nobles, who pelted him with unsavoury eggs and fruit, while the jester, in a paper helmet, and with a wooden sword, excited general shouts of laughter by his vapouring, screaming, and mock airs of defiance.

After all these practical jokes, we are glad to come upon that rare thing in an Italian jester, namely, wit. The sample of it which I have now to furnish is well known, indeed, but it is said to have originally belonged to a Pavian jester, who, when the surgeons and the doctors of law were at loggerheads on a question of precedents, suggested to the Duke of Milan, who asked his counsel, that the matter was easy enough of settlement. "When a murderer," said he, "goes to execution, he always walks before the hangman; so here, the surgeons ought to precede the doctors of law."

The slyest hint made against the want of wit in an Italian jester, was that of Cardinal Perron to the Duke of Mantua. "Your Highness's fool," said he, "has the most stupendous wit I ever heard of; for he gains a livelihood by a profession he does not understand."

Patrons and jesters were, indeed, often worthy of each other. When Dante was a fugitive, and was received at the court of Cane della Scala, he found there a host of jugglers, singers, and jesters, the latter of whom, especially, did not spare the almost friendless poet. "How comes it?" asked one of him, at his lord's table, "that you, who are accounted such a wise and learned man, are such a poor devil, while I, who am but a fool, am rich, and well cared for?" "There is nothing wonderful therein," answered Dante, calmly; "when I find a patron whose sentiments are in accordance with mine, as you have found one who very much resembles *you*, then, like you, my merry friend, I shall be rich and well cared for too."

Dante was not wrong in comparing Cane della Scala

with the fool, for that great personage often played fool's tricks on the poet himself. On one occasion, at a banquet, Cane ordered the bones left from the feast to be quietly deposited beneath the seat of Dante. When the company arose, there was a universal shout of laughter at the strange heap then visible to all. Dante was not disconcerted. "Truly," said he, "it is nothing wonderful that the dog (Canis) hath gnawed his bones; but I am no dog, and have nothing to do with these." And therewith he walked proudly away.

Milan, like Verona, had its jesters at court, but the only incident therewith worth repeating is, that at the court of Duke Francis Sforza, the fool Marchesina bore so striking a resemblance to the Duke's son-in-law, Malatesta, that it was thought necessary always to send Marchesina out of Milan whenever Malatesta repaired thither on a visit.

From the Italian jesters we will, if my readers please, pass finally to those of households where we might least expect to find them, unless Scripture could give warrant for their employment,—namely, priestly households where fools found homes.

JESTERS IN PRIESTS' HOUSES.

THE court fool, like the tailor, is one whose avocation is passed by without notice in Scripture. From no passage in Holy Writ could the old church dignitaries who maintained fools in their households, find warrant for their practice; they simply found a worldly fashion, and adopted it. Like princes, they were not always free from "vapours;" and as princes sought to cure their melancholy by the agency of hired mirth-makers, these reverend gentlemen followed the example.

With respect to the profession of fools, in its connection with the Clergy, there are two circumstances which present themselves to our attention, and excite our surprise. In old pictures and woodcuts representing inner clerical life, the presence of the jester proves that he was an actual member of the godly and merry household. This is further certain by several edicts, which forbid, not only various church dignitaries therein named from maintaining fools, but also forbidding abbesses from making dull days in convents tolerable by employing jesters to help them through such heavy seasons. But if it be matter of some surprise, to find grave religious dignitaries and solemn lady abbesses taking pleasure in such jokes as the professional mirth-maker could manufacture for them, a still greater measure of surprise is excited by the fact, that these holy personages occasionally acted the fool themselves, at the tables of patrons whose particular favour they most earnestly desired. That this irregular practice must have prevailed to a very wide extent, is ascertained by a passage in a decree of the

Council of Cahors, to this effect: "It is also our command, that the clergy shall not practise as jesters, fools, or buffoons (*Joculatores, Goliardi, seu Bufones*), declaring that if they exercise such disgraceful profession for one year, they are thereby deprived of every ecclesiastical privilege; and further ordering, that if they do not desist, after being duly admonished, they shall be subjected, in addition, to secular punishment." I am afraid that the Council of Cahors would not even have granted exemption to Sydney Smith.

Among the punishments alluded to, was whipping—after degradation. The last alone was no joke to a clerical jester. He was condemned to serve his brethren, and to go to communion as a simple laic. If such an offender travelled without testimonials, he was further subject to great annoyance and suspicion, as (to take an early example) when Chrysostom, at Constantinople, hospitably entertained some agreeable Egyptian monks, he was delighted with his visitors, but he would not admit them to the Eucharist. The joyous strangers might, for aught he knew, be under censure, and he treated them accordingly.

But, although Scripture does not mention, and the Councils of the Church do not sanction, "fools," the latter particularly when they are members also of the clerical profession; yet the jester does not lack a protector among the Saints. The Church, indeed, has been, if one may say so without being impertinent, a little inconsistent towards the professional merrymen, when it is recollected, that in the roll of Saints there are two who especially favour fools. One is St. Mathurin, who was always invoked by them in sickness. He was a very good man, who lived at Montargis, in the fourth century, and who condescended to be the physician of all professional jesters, till the vocation became extinct. The other, and more especially patron-saint, was St. Julian; but which of the half-dozen of solemn and shadowy men who bear that name on the calendar, I am unable

to say. Probably it was the Julian who, in the seventh century, was Archbishop of Toledo. This prelate not only lived at the court of King Wemba, but he talked him into abdicating the crown, and assuming the cowl. There was no other but a fool who could have had such liberty of speech, or was likely to have used it so effectually,—and from this circumstance. is, perhaps, derived the alleged fact of St. Julian's patronage of the professors of folly.

Whatever the Saint may have thought of the community, it is very clear that the Church did not regard its members with so much complacency as certain individual priests, who loved to have a "fun-maker" in their household. I suppose the liking and the practices to which it led were abused, or solemn councils would hardly have issued stern prohibitions, by which prelates were forbidden to retain the professional fool. The prohibition was referred to during many centuries, and we are told that Antony Sanderus, as late as 1624, reproached the clergy of his time with their love for buffoons, and for young ladies whose wit might be heavier, but whose principles were lighter than any ever professed beneath the party-coloured gabardine.

There was a time when *some* church corporations peculiarly honoured the votary of St. Julian. At Tournay, for instance, at the annual procession of the Holy Sacrament, the pompous line of march was opened by the official *fou de la ville*, who was paid by the municipality. When we read that his dress, acts, and words were all of the most extravagant description, we are surprised to learn that the office was sometimes filled by a wealthy banker of the city. At *that* time perhaps bankers were more fools than knaves.

A reminiscence of this custom was exhibited in Belgium as late as 1834, at the musical contest in Brussels, when several troops of musicians from various provinces entered the city, with their especial "fou" at the head of every company.

Among the Popes, there was none who so liberally patronized jesters as Leo X. It has been said of this prelate that a witty fool had always a much better chance of obtaining an audience of him than a grave philosopher. Jovius and Guicciardini agree in the fact of the papal predilection for fellows who could afford him mirth, not merely by their light learning, but by their gross and heavy appetites. The same writers especially allude to the favour which Leo extended to buffoons, and to those so-called arch-poets who played the fool and miserably degraded themselves for the sake of a half-gnawed bone and a handful of ducats. The most famous, yet not the grossest of these mirthmakers, was Querno, a Neapolitan by birth, with a diminutive figure, a huge appetite, and an unquenchable thirst. The mock ovation of this arch-poet, his march to the Capitol, crowned with a wreath of vine, carrot, and cabbage-leaves, and mounted on an elephant, is a well-known incident, as is also his bandying of indifferent Latin verses, improvised for the nonce, with Leo himself. This buffoon, although by no means devoid of mental endowments, was content to stand by at papal banquets, and amuse the godly company by the greedy avidity with which he swallowed the fragments and half-consumed dishes despatched to him from the pontiff's table. If Querno was a buffoon, he was at least that sort of fool to perform whose part efficiently requires a certain sort of wit. But Leo had other jesters who had no merit but the sorry one of being disagreeable fools. Of these we may judge by what is said of two of them, a greedy, insatiable fellow named Martinus, and a mendicant brother called Marianus. They certainly were wonderful buffoons in their way, for one could take a pigeon, roasted or stewed, compress it into a species of gigantic bolus, and swallow it whole, at one gulp. The other made no difficulty of devouring forty eggs at a meal, and indeed on high festive days, wondering and applauding guests saw him deliberately devour a score of capons!

Of the extravagance of Leo's table, his successor, Adrian VI., was heartily ashamed, having a sort of disgust for a pontiff who, in the company of buffoons like Querno, Gazoldo, Britonio, and Baraballo, could eat himself into an indigestion, or see others do so, on costly dishes of peacock-sausages. But in this case we have an instance of that easy compounding for one's own sins by denouncing those of our neighbours. Adrian did not care for costly dishes or jesters; but his appetite was under less control than that of Leo, if it be true, as Jovius says of him, that the Flemish pontiff drank himself into chronic disease on strong beer. "Contrahisse morbum assiduum cerevisiæ potu."

According to some writers, it was the fool Baraballo, and not Querno, who was processionally conducted in mock pomp through the streets of Rome, to be crowned in the Capitol. The absurd verses of this jester procured for him this doubtful honour; but when he uttered dull jokes in bad measure, Leo would order him to be bastinadoed,—and to such depth could one of the most intellectual of pontiffs stoop to find relaxation from heavy duties and oblivion of as heavy responsibilities. But he might cite as example and excuse the Pontiff Paul II., who from 1458 to 1464 found exquisite delight in the poor jests of his official fools. But Paul was at least more orthodox than Leo, and in that distinction there is a world of difference.

Both these pontiffs differed from Benedict XIV., who was Pope from 1740 to 1758. Benedict loved a joke, but he loved to make it himself, and he might therefore be set down among those potentates who have been their own fools. When he was yet but Consistorial Advocate—a sufficiently grave and responsible dignitary—the spirit of fun so strongly influenced him, that at carnival-time he would issue into the thronged streets in the burlesqued costume of a doctor of divinity, and, mounting on a stool, would hold forth to the other gay masquers, denouncing their sins so pleasantly that

their only regret was, that they were not fathoms deeper in iniquity, that they might laugh the more at the comic recapitulation of their offences. When Benedict became Pope, he endeavoured to suppress the carnival orgies; but the popular voice expressed itself so menacingly that he was content to leave others to enjoy what he could no longer participate in himself. He then confined himself to playing tricks on the Cardinals. His chief butt was Cardinal Passionei, a patient, orthodox man, who equally hated heresy and the Jesuits. The papal jokes were practical; as when the Pope, hearing that his Eminence had ordered a chest of books to be sent to him, contrived that a chest should reach him full of the most famous heretical and condemned volumes. The papal enjoyment here consisted in beholding the horror of the Cardinal on opening the case, and in seeing the delicate disgust with which he seized each work with a pair of tongs, and tossed it into the fire.

The spiritual prince-electors followed the fashion, and retained fools who seem to have been pretty plainly spoken. Thus, when the Elector Brendal of Mayence asked his jester what he thought of the newly-gilded chancel of the cathedral, Sir Motley replied, "I think it is very like the golden goblet in which the Hessians drink sour beer. Your newly-gilded chancel will be filled by dirty thieves of monks."

Far bolder, however, was the reply of the electoral buffoon, Witzel, to Wolfgang, another Elector of Mayence, who asked him of what gender the word *Mater* was. "Well," answered the fool, "mine is *generis feminini;* but your Electoral Highness's *mater* is *generis communis.*" The fools of the Mayence Electors, it may be added, were not all remarkable only for wit; one at least, Pastore, fool to Albert of Mayence, was a kindly and brave-hearted man. When he knew there was a design on foot to make away with a Reforming preacher named Winkel, who, in 1527, had been summoned to Mayence to render account of his

stewardship, Pastore aided him to escape. Poor Winkel was ultimately murdered; but the good deed of Pastore was not forgotten by the Reformers in their indignation against the more wicked agents of his unscrupulous master.

The electors of Cologne kept so princely a court that the uniform of the jesters rubbed against that of the body-guard. Such samples, however, as I can find of their wit do not say much for their humour or delicacy. That wit appears to have been exercised chiefly against their ghostly masters' vices, and in this respect they had no sinecure. Or it was exhibited in rather uncleanly practical jokes, or as uncleanly repartees, and a record of the fact may well take place of a sample from the measure.

In treating of the jesters of foreign countries, there is some difficulty in conveying a fair idea of their wit, as by mere translation the point is ordinarily lost. The jests of Crafulla, a clever buffoon, yet not an official fool, who was constantly in the society of the Cardinal de' Medici, are exactly in this condition. It is not much better with Barciacca, the house-fool of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici. Such wit as he had will not bear, and is hardly worthy, translation; while his practical jokes are really not worth narrating. One can only wonder how any of the Medici, refined and learned men, could laugh at such sorry amusement. Barciacca once compared himself with the Cardinal, on the ground that he daily fed as many as his Eminence; and when the latter expressed doubt of the fact, the fool stripped himself to the drawers, to exhibit the marks of the thousands that began feeding on him as soon as he lay down to sleep in the bed assigned him in the Cardinal's palace. Ippolito laughed at this till he nearly lost breath. The joke only shows that the *palazzo Cardinale* was not of the cleanest, and that in point of humour his Eminence was easily pleased.

Again, if we look to the fools of Cardinals in England,

we shall not find them particularly distinguished for happiness of wit. The best thing uttered by Cardinal Wolsey's jester, Saxton, was his wish that Wolsey might become Pope. "For you see," said he, "Peter's father being a fisherman, he ordered all men to eat fish in Lent, for the sake of his father's trade; now, your Eminence's father having been a butcher, we should hope, for a similar reason, to be ordered to eat meat all the year round." This is at least as good as anything that is told of foreign fools in the palaces of Cardinals; and I may add, that Wolsey's fool was prophet also, if we may credit the story in which we are told, that, once, as the Cardinal was contemplating the design for a tomb intended for himself, the fool remarked, "The tomb is well enough, but your Eminence's bones will never lie in it," which proved to be true.

Cardinal Richelieu possessed a better taste in jesters than Wolsey. His buffoons were men of wit and learning, and the latter were admirably combined in the Abbé de Boisrobert, who brought to the Cardinal his daily dish of city scandal, amused him by his imitations of the peculiarities of Richelieu's friends, wrote half his tragedies for him, knew more of the drama than of divinity, was so constantly present at the theatre that it came to be called the "Cathedral of Boisrobert," and finally, who founded the French Academy. The Abbé was no ordinary fool, but an incomparable wit; and when he was out of favour with Richelieu, and the latter was ill, his physician wrote the simple but indispensable prescription, "Recipe Boisrobert!"

If Cardinals had their jesters, we must not be surprised to find them in episcopal houses. In Germany, in the 16th and 17th centuries, some of them exhibited the usual bent of the class for practical joking; some were famous for their feats of strength; others for their blasphemy; one or two were remarkable for their simplicity; but none of them can be said to have been distinguished for wit. I have already

mentioned Klaus Narr in a ducal household; he was subsequently jester to Ernst, Archbishop of Magdeburg. In this service, if he did nothing else, he at least gave rise to a proverbial saying. He had covered the floor of the Archbishop's room with feathers from a bed which he had ripped open. The prelate, on entering the apartment, angrily inquired who had done this; and as, at the moment, the Archbishop's dog Lepsch, which had been in the chamber the whole time of Klaus Narr's freak, rose from his couchant position, and opened his mouth, Klaus called to him angrily, "Lepsch, boy, don't let out the secret!" The prelate laughed; and the expression became a proverb, to be applied in cases where silence was recommended.

The Bishop of Bamberg was less choice in his fool than his brother of Magdeburg. He kept a jester whose chief wit consisted in passing himself off as the brother of our Saviour. This poor wretch prattled incessantly of incidents in the household of his supposed family, and drew laughter from his reverend master by chatting with fearful familiarity of the events of a life, death, and resurrection which no Christian can ever think of without emotions of sympathy, love, and gratitude. This sorry fool, once seeing his godly patron treating with immense demonstration of friendship a deputation of Nurembergers whom he intended to fleece, imprison, and hang, the jester exclaimed, "Ay, ay! I remember how my good brother Jesus was superbly treated when he entered Jerusalem in triumph; but those rascally Jews plundered and executed him nevertheless!" The blasphemy certainly served the purpose of putting the Nurembergers on their guard; and the Bishop was only annoyed at it because it frustrated a cherished purpose.

The bad taste of the Bamberg bishops with respect to their jesters, is illustrated in another diocesan, who lived in part of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. This

exemplary divine maintained a coarse, strong, active, semi-savage peasant, who amused the episcopal court and guests by going about on all-fours, and often with a dwarf on his back, like a young knight on a huge steed. The fun consisted in the steed trying to unhorse the cavalier. Sometimes this huge fellow would leap on to the table without upsetting a goblet; at other times he was baited in the Bishop's dining-room by dogs, and they generally had the worst of it. Springing at them in his wild attire, and uttering unearthly howls, he would pull down with his teeth even the fiercest bull-dogs, and so terribly maul them that they would not try a second attack. As for dogs of less ferocious breed, they flew at once from his terrific bellowing, seldom waiting to try the effect of his teeth. The agility of this savage was equal to his strength, and he would run along the uppermost parapet of the episcopal palace, and throw somersaults upon it as carelessly as if he had been on the ground, to the wild delight of the Bambergers, who were not very superior in moral qualities to the people of Munster. The latter had more regard for the fool of *their* Bishop than the fool had for them. One morning, the prelate's jester was seen in a field belonging to his master, sowing pebbles. "It would be more profitable," remarked a spectator, "if you could sow seed that should bring a crop of honest men." "Ah," answered the joker, "that's a crop that the land of Munster is of too bad a quality to produce."

Julius, Bishop of Wurtzburg, had as witty a fool as his brother of Munster. This jester was very much petted; but like spoiled favourites, he sometimes offended grievously by his impertinence, and the Bishop once ordered him to prison. While the gaoler was strewing some straw on the ground of the cell for the condemned jester to lie upon, the latter slipped out, locked the keeper in, and carried the key to the Bishop, with the remark that it was "all right."

"All right?" exclaimed the prelate. "It is all wrong, since you are not in prison, sirrah, and the gaoler is." "There may be some mistake," answered the joker; "but I can hardly think so. You ordered a fool to prison, and I am sure you will find one there, if you will only look for him."

The prelates who kept fools about their hearth, had not unfrequently a taste of their office which was more likely to excite anger than merriment. These prelates occasionally even slept with their jesters. The former could not have been much given to meditation, since they depended on the latter to laugh them into sleep, or to solace them by merriment when they were wakeful. One of the princely Archbishops of Cologne followed this very indifferent fashion.

Were not my space becoming so limited, I might here fittingly notice those "Festivals of Fools" in which whole cities once took part, and of which the church was the principal scene. I allude especially to those *Fêtes des Fous*, Saturnalia established or continued to conciliate semi-converted pagans, and which were not entirely abolished till the end of the sixteenth century. This subject, however, would require a volume, and in some countries has had *volumes* devoted to it. The chief characteristic of a *Fête des Fous* was, insult to the Church, and it is astonishing that a powerful Church bore with the nuisance for so long a period. A boy was, generally at the Epiphany, elected as Bishop, mounted on an ass, and escorted to church, where the people would interrupt the priest at his office, by unseemly songs, jeers, and profane and filthy conversation. Some would play at dice upon the altar, while others would feign to denounce them, or pretend to assist the priest, by mock exhortations or obscene lectures. The procession of fools, on leaving the church, greeted the open-mouthed starers by flinging bran in their faces, as they passed; and amused others by jumping over brooms, and

chanting so-called hymns,—that were not for edification. This abomination lasted so long that many conservatively-minded persons saw a mystery in it, and when the church authorities aided the secular government to suppress the iniquity, there were not wanting individuals who maintained that this festival of fools was as pleasing to God, as the holiest festival of the year! Among these objectors to the suppression of this custom, were many clerics, who either enjoyed the uproarious holiday or made profit by being actors on the occasion.

In connection with jests and jesters near the Church, I could not well avoid mentioning this festival, where the buffoons exceeded any license assumed by official fools in royal and imperial courts. There are, however, so many well-known works or essays devoted to this matter, that I gladly leave the subject, trusting that if there be a reader who has gone with me thus far, he will accompany me through one more chapter before we finally part.

PRINCES WHO HAVE BEEN THEIR OWN FOOLS.

Although I have made almost an encyclopædia of notes touching exalted personages who, since the decline or the suppression of official fools, have shown a disposition to perform the office on their own account, neither my space nor my sympathy for the persevering reader who has thus far accompanied me, will admit of my placing a hundredth part of them before the public. A few instances, however, I will at once proceed to give, only premising, that it was lucky for a people when the Prince, in playing the Fool, enacted his part without inflicting anything very detrimental upon his subjects. Among those whose follies may be said to have been comparatively harmless, is to be reckoned that Prince who was called the Fool of his Health, namely, Ferdinand II., Grand Duke of Tuscany, who died in 1670, and was remarkable for the anxiety with which he attended to his health. "I have frequently seen him," says the Abbé Arnauld, "pacing up and down his chamber between two large thermometers, upon which he would keep his eyes constantly fixed, unceasingly employed in taking off and putting on a variety of skull-caps of different degrees of warmth, of which he had always five or six in his hand, according to the degree of heat or cold registered by the instruments. This, I can assure you, was a mighty pleasant sight to behold, for there was not a conjuror in all his dominions more dexterous in handling his cups and balls than was this prince in shifting his caps."

If this was silly, it at least was in better taste than characterized the proceeding of the Princess of the Asturias, at

Madrid, when Saint-Simon took ceremonious leave of her before he returned to France, in 1722. In full court, and to all his formal compliments and speeches, her Royal Highness only replied by a loud rattling noise in the trachea, which she repeated as he concluded each of his addresses to her. The poor Duke was stupefied, but the court was in fits of laughter, and hilariously admired the jest.

The great Condé furnishes us with another example of this class of fools. A village schoolmaster once came to him with an address. As the speaker bowed low, on commencing his speech, Condé, quick as thought, vaulted over his back. With equal rapidity, the orator turned and continued his speech, but Condé's folly was uppermost, and laying a light hand upon the pedagogue's shoulder, over he bounded again, lightly as an equestrian in a "daring act" of the harmless arena. The baffled speaker then gave up the attempt, and left the princely fool to the enjoyment of the recollection of his folly.

The father of the last Duke of Mantua, Charles III., was another of those illustrious personages who preferred being his own fool, and after a singular fashion too. He loved to go abroad in the dirtiest of disguises, and accompanied by an escort of equally ill clad bullies for his defence. It was his sport to assail all he met in the coarsest terms, and when some persons thus assaulted, more impatient than others, fell upon him in return, with tongue or cudgel, he would laugh till he was sore, and then his escort came to the rescue. On other occasions, he would enter the shops of vendors of very breakable materials, and taking up mirrors or drinking glass, or any other fragile matter that came to hand, he would let it fall to the ground, and find double provocation to laughter in the ruin he had committed and in the expressions of unrestrained abuse which were showered on him in consequence.

Something of madness must have lurked under this;

but in the next buffoon we shall only see a development of natural disposition.

The dexterity of a quack doctor at a fair made of Peter the Great his own fool, when the humour took him to play the character. The Czar had seen the fellow, on a platform, skilfully pushing out teeth with the end of a ladle, or picking them out with the point of a dagger. Peter paid for instruction in the art, and forthwith began to practise it on his courtiers, whose teeth were never safe within their lips. It happened on one occasion that a Russian officer had exposed himself to the Czar's wrath, by being absent from a post at which Peter had especially placed him. It was necessary that the offender should meet his enraged sovereign, and his friends gave him up for lost, when he entered the audience chamber. But the officer, as he crossed the threshold, pulled out his handkerchief, pressed it to his cheek, and advanced towards the Czar with a growl of agony. Peter, delighted at the prospect of a patient, pushed him into a chair; the officer opened wide his jaws, and the Czar tugged at his gums with a fury that made the sufferer roar as if he had been under the knout, but which was attended by the extraction of two useful and stupendous grinders. Peter looked at the teeth, and then at his patient, whose lips were still open with pain and discoloured by blood. The Imperial surgeon laughed and danced with delight; but looking in the face of the officer, his own darkened with rage, on recognizing the offender. The latter, shuddering at the look, sank back in his chair and opened his jaws wider, indicative of another offering from the same source. What could the amateur dentist do? He laughed louder, danced more wildly with ecstasy, pulled out another tooth, and dismissed the crafty but clever patient, with full pardon.

The Czarina Elizabeth, in a milder form it is true, suffered also under this malady of folly. This lady's delight was, never to sign any document brought to her by her

ministers, till she had worn them out by her refusals. When the Grand Chancellor Besterfchef laid before her a paper which required her name at the bottom of it in order to give it validity, she would toss the pen across the room, begin dancing round the minister, who turned upon his knees to meet her face and to implore her, with tears in his eyes, to cease from such folly. The Czarina only danced on, laughing the more immoderately as she observed the embarrassment and the tears of the Chancellor. The latter however seldom left her till he had made her ashamed of playing the fool, and of interrupting public business by refusing to scrawl her name to a state paper.

At a semi-barbarous court like that of Russia, the above traits are not very surprising. At that of Spain, which boasted so loudly of its solemn grandeur, dignity, and refinement, we find a more surprising instance, but quite different from that I have mentioned of the Princess of the Asturias.

The Spanish royal family of the last century affords us an instance of the Heir to the Throne not only being his own fool, but of his raising his friends to the dignity of folly, by conferring on them its insignia. Lord Ligonier, the husband of one of Alfieri's worthless idols, was English Ambassador at the court of Madrid during a portion of the reign of Charles III., which lasted from 1759 to 1788. After Lord Ligonier's introduction to the King, he was conducted to the apartments of the Heir to the Crown, the Prince of the Asturias. The latter was, subsequently, that Charles IV. who was his own Queen's especial fool throughout the term of their married lives. As Lord Ligonier approached the Prince's chamber, he saw issuing therefrom a number of grandees, each wearing, with proud gravity, a fantastic fool's cap. On inquiring the meaning of such a pageant, he was informed that his Royal Highness possessed the fancy of distinguishing his most cherished friends as his "fools."

The Prince, too, was often pleased to confer this mark of his favour on celebrated foreigners. Lord Ligonier was alarmed.

"I represent," he said, "a great sovereign; and am myself a foreigner not altogether unknown. I must add, that my gracious master would be seriously offended, if the Prince of the Asturias were to think proper to cover the representative of the King of England with this decoration. You had better go in, Sir," said he to his introducer, "and say as much to his Royal Highness."

The reluctant official undertook the mission; but he presently returned, with the intimation that the Prince could not give up an old-established custom. Upon which, Lord Ligonier turned on his heel, declaring that he would not visit a Prince who thus exposed an Ambassador to insult. The court officials were thrown into a state of amusing terror by this declaration; they maintained, that if the Ambassador retired, it would be a flagrant insult on the Prince. Ultimately, and after many messages and countermessages had passed between the Prince in his room, and the English Envoy in the antechamber, announcement was made that the Prince of the Asturias would not attempt to clap the fool's-cap on the head of Lord Ligonier. His lordship consequently entered the apartment, but not without being more than usually vigilant against surprise. He found the sage Prince with his back to the hearth, and with his hands behind him. The Prince remained in that position, and invited the Ambassador to approach. The English lord obeyed; but as he advanced, he perceived that the Prince held a paper object, and the Ambassador stopped short to converse with his Royal Highness at a very respectful distance. At the conclusion of the interview, he had to bow low; but, as a sailor might say, his weather eye was open, and he watched the Prince narrowly. The latter was resolved upon finding his object, and as narrowly watched the Ambassador. The

bow was almost at its lowest, when the Prince, seizing the most favourable opportunity, suddenly brought the fool's cap from behind him, and endeavoured to fix it on the head of Lord Ligonier; but the old soldier who, by one glorious action at Laffeldt, had disconcerted all the projects of Marshal Saxe, was not to be foiled by a foolish prince. As soon as his eye caught sight of the cap, his hand was upon it, and almost as soon it lay crumpled up beneath his feet. His sudden action nearly threw the Prince out of his equilibrium; and leaving that illustrious fool's-cap maker to recover himself as he best might, the old warrior quitted the apartment with a smile of scorn upon his lip.

Turning now from the Envoy from, to the King of, England, I may observe that the greatest opportunity for court fools to exhibit their wit or slyness, occurred when great political events were passing before them. They were then the merry scholiasts of living history. At no period in England, since the foundation of the monarchy, could a professional fool have found more incentives to fun or satire, than during the eventful reign of George III. And of all that reign, the time of "the Coalition," in 1783, was that on which a witty court fool, in the secret of what was passing and what was about to pass, would have had most to say, hint, or laugh at. The Shelburne Administration had gone to pieces, and that fatal "Coalition" had been forced on George III., who indignantly saw himself compelled to accept a union of men who had for years been denouncing each other as void of principle, and worthy of the hangman. Lord North and Charles Fox, antipodes in everything but wit and good temper, came together, with other bitter foes, who had salved over their old sores, but wounded their reputation, for ever. When the new ministers first appeared at court before that good and obstinate old sovereign whom they and other ministers helped or harassed into madness, George III. had made up his mind

to rid himself of them at the very earliest opportunity. Had there been a court fool present who knew the royal intention, he would have revelled in jokes, gibes, and inuendoes. As it was, the King was his own fool, and could not avoid showing a sign of his resolve. How he did it, is whimsically and authentically told in the second volume, page 28, of Russell's Memoirs of Fox. Lord Holland is speaking, and in these words:—"I cannot help relating a saying of that lively and humorous old man" (the Marquis of Townshend) "on this occasion. He said he had always foreseen the Coalition Ministry could not last, for he was at court when Mr. Fox kissed hands; and he observed George III. *turn back his ears and eyes* just like the horse at Astley's, when the tailor he had determined to throw was getting on him." This was the very action of a court fool, and not one of the fraternity could have performed it more felicitously than the King, who, on this occasion, was his own.

The eldest son of George III. had his comic aspect too, and was an excellent mimic. If we may believe the very respectable authority of Mr. Raikes, whose journals show him to have been a visitor at the Pavilion, and the intimate friend of many who visited there more frequently than himself, George IV., in playing the fool, was not at all scrupulous as to sacrificing his own ministers, for the sake of effect. Indeed, they were very good objects for the ridicule of a monarch who was his own jester. The "best wigged Prince in Christendom" had in perfection one of the chief qualities of the professional fool,—the power of imitation. Mr. Raikes affords an illustration of this in a story told him by the Duke of Wellington. "When the King sent for me," said the Duke, "to form a new administration, in 1828, he was then seriously ill, though he would never allow it. I found him in bed, dressed in a dirty silk jacket and a turban night-cap, one on wrong on the other;

for, notwithstanding his coquetry about dress in public, he was extremely slovenly and dirty in private. The first words he said to me were, 'Arthur, the Cabinet is defunct;' and then he began to describe the manner in which the late ministers had taken leave of him, in giving in their resignations. This was accompanied by the most ludicrous mimicry of the voice and manner of each individual, so strikingly like, that it was quite impossible to refrain from fits of laughter."

"If George IV. was strong in the fool's quality of mimicry, Louis Philippe was not less so in coarser mockery; but then the latter King was too grave an actor to allow of his playing the fool in presence even of a friend or minister. He, however, could indulge in a brief private performance of the character, and he was once unwittingly caught in the fact by one of his private secretaries, who had concealed himself behind a door, in order to escape the observation of the King. His Majesty was approaching in deep conversation with the old republican, Dupont de l'Eure. The monarch at the head of "the best of republics," treated the aged confederate, of whom he wished to be well rid, with an excess of warmth and courtesy. Louis Philippe professed ideas liberal enough to gratify a republican so advanced as M. Dupont, of whom he finally took leave in the most condescending and friendly manner. "No sooner, however," says Mr. Raikes, who was the confidant of the secretary, "had the other turned his back to go out, and before he quitted the room, than Louis Philippe began to hold up his finger at him, with a face of mockery, and made a movement with his foot, as if he could hardly prevent himself from kicking him." This bit of pantomimic incivility was often the manner of the most comic of court fools, and probably Triboulet himself could not have enacted it in superior style.

But I must draw my instances to a close, and perhaps I

cannot do so more appropriately than by showing the merits, as a jester, of a sovereign whose country has since been the scene where martyrs have died, and heroes have avenged them. I refer to Oude, and I will add, that perhaps few monarchs ever so perfectly played the fool for his own satisfaction and that of his court, as Nassir-u-Deen, the late King of that country. His great delight was in puppet-shows, and it was on the occasion of one being exhibited before him that the following occurrence took place, as recorded in the 'Private Life of an Eastern King.'

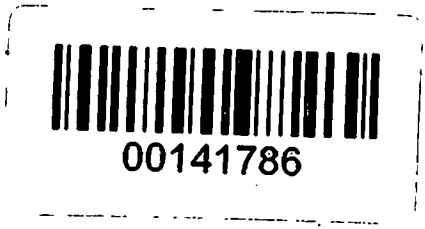
"His Majesty laughed heartily at the performances of the little burlesques of men and women. . . . At length he gave a whispered order to his barber," (who, it may be mentioned, began life as a hair-dresser in London, and rose to the combined offices of barber and prime-minister to a King,) "who went out, brought something in his hand, and gave it to the King. The royal chair was pushed back, and his Majesty condescended to advance to the front of the puppet-show, going round the table, as if to inspect it more closely. The owners exerted themselves to give still more satisfaction, regarding their fortunes as made. The King watched for a little; his hand was advanced suddenly, and as suddenly drawn back, and one of the innocent marionettes fell motionless upon the stage. It was very plain that his Majesty had a pair of scissors in his hand, and had cut the string. The performers must have been as well aware of this as we were, but they gazed in affected wonder at the catastrophe. . . . The King turned round, his face beaming with fun, and looked at us knowingly, as much as to say, 'Did I not do that well?' The barber laughed loudly in reply, and other courtiers joined in the chorus. But this was not the whole of the royal wit. The hand was pushed forward and drawn back again and again, and again and again did one after another of the puppets fall dead and immovable upon the stage, every successive fall eliciting a shout

of laughter from the table and a blank look of astonishment from the general manager of the show, who was visible directing and superintending. When nearly all had fallen, the royal wit was satisfied, returned to his chair, ordered a handsome present to be given to the owner of the show, and it was withdrawn."

With this court jest, I too will withdraw, leaving my puppets to be dealt with according as my readers may have found them more or less awkwardly handled by their showman. If the latter has amused or instructed the public audience, whose generous indulgence he has so often had to gratefully acknowledge, his aim has been accomplished. He has not pretended to instruct, but has simply brought together materials for instructors, and for *con*structors of future histories of a class which, in some shape or other, has existed from the legendary days of Momus down to those of contemporary Christian patriarchs in Asia, of whose households the buffoon is still sometimes a member. To effect this, demanded only a little industry;—small merit in a country where industry is the recognized duty of every citizen, and the only merit claimed by the author of these essays towards the History of Court and Household Fools.

THE END.

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, PRINTER,
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